“Aerospace is Politics with Wings on it”. Exploring the Role and Political Function of Trade Associations in the UK Aerospace Industry

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Award date:
2018

Awarding institution:
Coventry University

“Aerospace is Politics with Wings on it”.[1]
Exploring the Role and Political Function of Trade Associations in the UK Aerospace Industry

By

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April 2018

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University’s requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Certificate of Ethical Approval

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Project Title:

"Aerospace is Politics with Wings on it". Exploring the Role and Political Function of Trade Associations in the UK Aerospace Industry

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:

20 April 2018

Project Reference Number:

P38572

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the political role of a specific form of meta-organisation in a highly politicised context such as the UK aerospace industry. Specifically, this study focuses on developing knowledge on the determinants of national and regional sectorial trade associations' political role and political strategy, and how they exert influence to shape the political and regulatory environment.[1]

An exploratory case study approach is chosen given the scarcity of qualitative empirical research, the sensitivity, as well as the lack of information on the formulation of political activities within trade associations. The original, primary data is mainly collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with senior firm and trade association representatives. Industry experts are also interviewed to corroborate and triangulate the information gained. The selection of the aerospace industry is based on the strong and intertwined relations between the industry and government, as well as the political, military and economic strategic prominence that is bestowed on this industry.

The findings suggest that to comprehensively understand what determines trade associations' political role and political strategy it is necessary to acknowledge broad institutional characteristics as well as specific organisational attributes. Moreover, the findings indicate two main overarching conceptual dimensions: firstly, an embeddedness in the institutional environment which mainly emerges through strong interactions with other organisations and the necessity to tap into the policy agenda of decision-makers; secondly, associations' activities build on those of other organisations and political actors to exert greater influence on the policymaking process.

This study contributes to on-going debates in nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity literature, specifically on how sector specific trade bodies may have a crucial role in mediating the business-government relationship. This is particularly relevant for policymakers who have yet to fully acknowledge the advantages of collaborating with such organisations.

[1] "Aerospace is politics with wings on it" is a quote extrapolated from a Business, Innovation and Skills select committee hearing in the House of Commons, by the former Head of Public Affairs of Airbus (House of Commons 2011, HC 735-II: 48).

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, and to Carlotta, without whom I would have never managed to make it so far.

Acknowledgments

Writing this thesis would have not been possible without the support and help of many people, a few of whom will be mentioned here.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Andrew Perchard, Professor Neil Forbes, Dr Neil Pyper and Professor Maureen Meadows. Andrew for inspiring me to undertake the PhD, for always believing in my potential, and for being a constant source of guidance and encouragement, Neil Forbes and Neil Pyper for their inspiring contributions, and Maureen for becoming involved as supervisor in the third year and for providing the crucial input necessary to successfully complete the thesis.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Dr Jason Begley for always being there, for his endless support, and for being a constant source of entertainment.

In addition to my supervisors, there are numerous people who have contributed to the success of this work, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them. I am indebted to the participants who generously gave their time and shared their knowledge and experience.

I am thankful to many of my colleagues, researchers and staff within the Centre for Business in Society and the Faculty of Business and Law, Dr David Jarvis, Professor Glauco De Vita, Dr Alessandro Merendino, Dr Paul Sissons and Dr Jennifer Ferreira. Thanks also to Helen Rowe, Dr Philip Dunham, Kate Pope and Jo Bishop for their invaluable service and support. Thanks to my friends for the many conversations and their continuous encouragement, Cristiana, Russel, Charles, Nora, Eline and Sanne.

A special thanks goes to Malte who shared the entire journey with me. He has certainly made it an easier and more enjoyable one. I am confident that our so called “quick calls”, which despite their appellation were never so brief, will persist.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Professor Thomas Lawton, to whom I am particularly grateful for sharing his extensive knowledge and expertise on nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity.

Moreover, I would like to thank my examiners Professor Andrew Barron and Professor Nigel Berkeley for making the Viva a pleasant and constructive experience.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and Carlotta for the unconditional support and motivation during the past three years.

Thank you all very much.

Table of Contents

Word count: 81 111

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

AGP	Aerospace Growth Partnership
APPG	All-Party Parliamentary Group
ASD	Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe
ATI	Aerospace Technology Institute
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPA	Corporate Political Activity
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DGP	Defence Growth Partnership
DIC	Defence Industries Council
DTI	Department for Trade and Investment
EASA	European Aviation Safety Agency
EEA	European Economic Area
EEF	EEF – The Manufacturers' Organisation
FAC	Farnborough Aerospace Consortium
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
MAA	Midlands Aerospace Alliance
MD	Managing Director
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	Northern Defence Industries
NMS	Nonmarket Strategy
NWAA	North West Aerospace Alliance
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
RAeS	Royal Aeronautical Society
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
SWAF	South West Aerospace Forum
UKTI	UK Trade & Investment

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Understanding the dynamics, processes and actors that entail the interaction between businesses and government has become an increasingly significant question following the growing influence that policymakers have on companies and the profuse efforts organisations undertake to influence their socio-political and regulatory environment (Doh et al. 2014). One of the key decisions firms face when interacting with policy-makers and regulators is whether to interact with them individually, and/or collectively by collaborating with other organisations (Hillman and Hitt 1999). One of the main expressions of the latter approach is through trade associations.

Trade associations, considered as "industry entrepreneurs, agents of collective identity, and political and social actors" (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017: 1), have acquired a pivotal political position in modern economies (e.g. Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015, Traxler and Huemer 2007) and play an influential role on firms, industries and societies as well as on the mediation of business-government relations (Wilts and Meyer 2005). However, despite their unique role there has been limited academic work that has addressed them (e.g. Baron 2016; Barringer and Harrison 2000; Berkowitz and Bor 2017; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Reveley and Ville 2010; Tschirhart and Gazley 2014; Traxler and Huemer 2007), and particularly in the management domain, used them as the primary unit of analysis (e.g. Barnett 2017; Barnett, Mischke, and Ocasio 2000).

The corporate political activity (CPA) and nonmarket strategy (NMS) streams of research have mostly focused on firms whilst investigating collective action (e.g. Barnett 2006; Jacomet 2005; Ozer and Lee 2009). Recent studies that have centred the level of analysis on trade associations, have mostly investigated the internal oriented functions of associations, such as how they help to structure an industry, the relations with firms, rather than examine the interactions with the political and regulatory environment (e.g. Buchanan and Marques 2017; Marques 2017). Correspondingly, Drope and Hansen (2009: 303) argue that scholars have concentrated more on firm political activities as opposed to trade associations' political activities. The research to date has tended to privilege investigations in which firms and trade associations are considered as indivisible

rather than considering trade associations as independent entities (e.g. Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings 2002).

Moreover, much of the research on CPA has rather focused on national level environments, whereas it must be acknowledged that a broad range of organisations undertake political actions on other levels as well, such as the local, regional and supranational levels (Rajwani and Liedong 2015: 281). A profuse number of studies have focused on the North-American context and the political, social and regulatory institutional frameworks that feature in such environment (Rajwani and Liedong 2015). These settings are unquestionably different to the UK in terms of the political structure, relationship between private and public actors as well as the role and nature of trade associations. This study is sensitive to these dissimilarities and in accordance with Aldrich (2017) is particularly cautious about drawing inferences from studies conducted in such a different context.

Conjointly, these features have led to an inadequate understanding of trade associations' strategy, structure, and dynamics of their establishment and development (e.g. Barnett 2013; Barnett, Mischke, and Ocasio 2000). Despite the importance of these organisations there is still limited theoretical development and empirical knowledge (Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2011). Whilst this is true in general, it is particularly striking if we take into consideration nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity perspectives (Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015).

Recently, there has been a renewed interest (e.g. Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017; Berkowitz and Bor 2017) in understanding a specific form of trade association, namely meta-organisations, which are associations whose members are other organisations (Ahrne and Brunsson 2008). Hence, the broad objective of this research is to explore the role and political functions of a specific form of meta-organisation, namely trade associations, in a highly politicised context such as the UK aerospace industry. The research focuses on developing knowledge on the determinants of sectorial trade associations' political role and on how national and regional trade bodies undertake political activities and attempt to influence and shape their political environment.

1.2 Research rationale

The research rationale surfaces from the acknowledgement that business-government relations are frequently characterised by an involvement of intermediaries. Within the broad range of entities that sit at the interface of the private and public spheres, trade associations can be considered as key organisations, as firms join them to shape their political environment. Concurrently governments and policy makers can refer to them when seeking industry-specific expertise a collective input and a representative voice (e.g. Taminiau and Wilts 2006).

It must be emphasised that the role, influence and effectiveness of business associations can vary depending on the industry and sectors in which they operate (Greenwood 2002). Hence, choosing an appropriate research context is particularly significant. The UK aerospace industry exhibits precise characteristics that are highly beneficial to understanding the role of associations and to the examination of the dynamics that govern private-public interactions. These characteristics, which can have an impact and influence on the nature and form of the relationship, can be recognised as institutional (e.g. the political and economic strategic importance that is given to this particular sector; Hartley 2014), industry-specific (e.g. strong trade association involvement, highly regulated, and high industry concentration; Grier, Munger, and Roberts 1991; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015), and firm specific (e.g. strong government dependence/links; Hadani 2012; Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002). This unique industry can thus be considered strategic as its positive externalities can benefit the UK in economic, military and political terms, conferring it a privileged status (Hartley 2014). Given the historical levels of government support and intervention, it can be argued that governments have had a definite desire not to allow such a strategic sector decline since the defence of the state, as well as its geopolitical international weight are so dependent on it. Thus, investigating trade associations' political role and political activities in such a politically sensitive industry can be considered of strong practical and theoretical value.

This research problem, as well as the need to investigate this area, finds justification both theoretically and empirically. In terms of the former, the problem is in line with Rajwani, Lawton, and Philip's (2015: 225) call to develop a clear "understanding of their [trade associations] purpose, sources of influence, and impact on companies, industries, and

society more broadly that reflects their unique role and special characteristics". Moreover, Rajwani and colleagues (2015) state that there are three main theoretical areas of research within the management domain, which are still limited in terms of associations: institutional theory, collective identity, and nonmarket strategy. This research is positioned within the nonmarket strategy domain, and specifically that of corporate political activity. In terms of the empirical justification, during the Aerodays 2015[2] conference where initial ideas of this research were presented, top-level firm and association managers, as well as experienced professionals operating in the industry provided positive feedback acknowledging a strong need to address this issue. Moreover, following several discussions with key informants the researcher gained information on other entities that in addition to trade associations have a crucial role in acting as intermediaries within the business-government interface (Doh and Teegen 2003). These entities include amongst others, think tanks, charities, NGOs, as well as ad-hoc partnerships, and even though it has been acknowledged that these actors serve as tools and platforms for businesses to relate with institutions, there is limited research on trade associations' relationships with these entities (Barley 2010).

Finally, this research is developed integrating insights from disciplines such as management, international business, political science, sociology, political economy and business history. In order to comprehensively address this research problem and understand the political role that trade associations play within the business-government dialogue, one disciplinary lens is not sufficient to single-handedly address the multiple issues and facets that characterise these complex organisations. This theoretical and disciplinary integration, which has often been overlooked within academia, is both necessary and beneficial as it is valuable from preventing conceptual and methodological myopia. There are a growing number of scholars in the broader business-government relations domain who draw on various theoretical lenses and call for an integration of different perspectives (e.g. Barron 2010; Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2012; Kingsley,

[2] Aerodays2015 was the European flagship event in Aviation research and innovation that took place on 20-23 October 2015 in London. There is an Aerodays event during each EU Research Framework Programme. The goal is to share achievements of collaborative research and innovation in Aeronautics and Air Transport within Europe and in worldwide international co-operation. The Young Researcher Competition is aimed at students as an excellent experiential learning opportunity to share their research with their peers and the aviation community (European Commission 2015).

Bonardi, and Vanden Bergh 2012; Lawton and Rajwani 2015; Mellahi et al. 2016). Van Schendelen (2002) and Vogel (1996) stress the importance of incorporating management and political science perspectives while investigating business-government relations. In line with this perspective, Barron and Hultén argue that management and political science literatures "have considerable potential to learn from each other" (2014: 964). Mellahi et al. (2016: 167) state that there has been an "overreliance on single theoretical lenses in empirical research", call for "greater theoretical micro-macro integration", and argue that nonmarket strategy literature has rather underlined the complementarity between different lenses rather than the tensions among them. This is echoed by John and Lawton (2017: 23) who mention the need to integrate the different domains, i.e. resource and capabilities, institution-based view and resource dependency.

Hence, merely considering the components that constitute the business-government equation, it is clear that there are several spheres involved which cannot be fully understood and appreciated if analysed exclusively from one perspective, as critical features that characterise them would be neglected. It should be acknowledged that an external reader could initially consider the adoption of such a diverse range of perspectives as superficial, although as justified above and throughout this study, the benefits gained from such a theoretical flexibility clearly outweigh possible drawbacks.

1.3 Research approach

Business-government relations and corporate political activity are sensitive topics, and as Frynas (2006: 326) argues "political behaviours are often covert in nature". It is thus common that organisations' political activities are frequently not open to investigations and rather kept in confidentiality within organisational walls. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to retrieve information on political behaviour and activities from secondary sources (Hillman and Wan 2005). These features may be valid for any sector but are particularly applicable to the aerospace industry (including both civil and military sectors), which has historically enjoyed extremely strong links with national governments in the UK and across other developed economies.

To understand the complex dynamics that characterise the interactions between trade associations, firms and political actors it was necessary to gain a position, which would enable a rich and in-depth investigation of the matter. Notwithstanding research has

frequently relied on quantitative methods and broad surveys to explore features linked to collective action (e.g. Battisti and Perry 2015; Bombardini and Trebbi 2012; Knoke 1990; Spillman 2005), a case study design was considered to be the most appropriate approach and was developed utilising qualitative methods. This is coherent with Barnett's (2013: 231) call to develop rich insights that are only achievable through the investigation of small sample sizes. This choice was further advocated by the exploratory nature of this thesis.

The research methodology embraced in-depth semi-structured interviews, informed by secondary data such as company, trade association, consultancy, NGO and institutional documentary sources, as well as indirect observations. The openness gained from the semi-structured interviews was extremely beneficial as adopting a more structured and predetermined approach would have restricted the conversations and prevented the surfacing of interesting and counterintuitive insights (Patton 2002). The informants were purposively selected from different backgrounds to provide different perspectives on the studied phenomena, offering a balanced picture (Partington 2002). These included three main categories: senior-level firm and trade association representatives, and industry experts. Whilst the first two were selected as directly involved in the development and/or execution of trade associations' political activities, the latter were selected to corroborate and triangulate the gained information. Moreover, the informants included in this study, pertain to the category of elite interviews, as they mainly occupied senior management positions and had significant input in the organisations' decision-making. This feature increased the value and richness of the collected data, which can be considered as a clear strength of this research.

Additionally, during the duration of the PhD the researcher engaged in an immersive interaction with industry stakeholders by attending numerous events, workshops, trade fairs, which other than being conducive towards developing relations with key actors - that in various occasions acted as gatekeepers - also supported a profound comprehension of trade associations' role and their interactions with the political arena. These observations can be considered as an additional source of data that complemented the interviews and documentary sources. The adoption and triangulation of multiple sources of methods, data and information have been necessary to provide a robust methodological approach and to support the findings (Yin 2014).

The data was analysed and interpreted utilising rigorous methods that entailed several stages, which assisted a progressive shift from an empirical level to a higher level of abstraction (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012). Moreover, as is common in qualitative research (e.g. Dubois and Gadde 2002) the data collection and the data analysis were not considered as stand-alone phases of the research, rather they were undertaken through an iterative approach.

1.4 Originality and contributions to knowledge

The originality of this study lies in the investigation of a specific form of trade association in a unique context such as the UK aerospace industry. The questions raised within this thesis are important as they specifically focus on trade associations as organisations in their own right (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017), and are worth examining given the prominence collective action, particularly through third-party organisations, is gaining towards tackling increasingly complex and wide-ranging issues that impact the business environment.

A further element of originality relates to the levels of examination as this research explores national as well as regional trade associations. Previous studies on trade associations have mostly investigated the national level (e.g. Bell 1995; Dalziel 2006; Reveley and Ville 2010; Wilts and Quittkat 2004) and the supranational level (e.g. Beyers 2004; Greenwood 2002), and apart from notable exceptions (e.g. Coleman and Grant 1985; Dixon 2006; Valler and Wood 2004) there is a lack of enquiries on trade associations on different levels of analysis, which has included multi-level consideration of trade associations. Moreover, the majority of these studies focus on national trade associations or cross-industry organisations and their sub-national divisions, as opposed to sectorial trade associations that exclusively operate on the local/regional level.

Finally, another element of originality concerns the unique period in which this research took place. This study is undertaken between the lead-up to the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum in 2016 and the first stages of the negotiations following the decision to leave, a turbulent period characterised by strong political and economic uncertainty. The particular timeframe of this research is important for two main reasons. On one side, governments are usually dependent on business actors when developing policy (e.g. Barron 2013; Taminiau and Wilts 2006), and in the context of

Brexit this is even more relevant and visible given the need for policymakers to consult industry actors in order to acquire complex information and industry-specific expertise. On the other side, the potential implications of such a significant event on the business environment, has further driven business actors to interact with policymakers, represent their interests and attempt to influence the policymaking process. Hence, it is reasonable to argue that this event has intensified the business-government interactions and benefitted the examination of trade associations' political activities. Together, these notions are extremely valuable towards developing an understanding and policy-relevant knowledge on how developing frameworks may influence future interactions between business and government.

The findings of this study are important as they further our understanding on the role of key business actors and their interactions with policymakers and regulators during periods of structural changes and political and economic uncertainty. The insights developed from this research are extremely valuable towards informing both managers and policymakers on how to deal with such situations. Moreover, even though it can be argued that the findings may be applicable to other settings, it is important to note that, as is common in qualitative studies (Blaikie 2009; Sarantakos 2009), generalizability to other contexts is rather restricted.

The essential contribution of this research lies thus in the in-depth and empirical exploration of trade associations' role and political strategy determinants and activities undertaken towards influencing the political and regulatory environment in a specific context. The contributions to knowledge of this study are set in the business-government relations field and specifically in the nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity arenas. Overall, this thesis argues that trade associations' political involvement and political activity development cannot be comprehensively understood with the adoption of single theoretical lenses. The complexity of these organisations and the structure and dynamic nature of their environment must be both taken into consideration.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured in seven chapters, and following this introductory chapter, the rest of thesis is briefly described below:

Chapter 2: Reviewing the literature on corporate political activity and trade associations, discusses the literature fields of nonmarket strategy, and corporate political activity, as well as literature on collective action and trade associations. The critique of existing literature is helpful towards providing a conceptual background of the CPA field. The chapter underlines the gaps in the literature and proposes three research questions.

Chapter 3: Research setting – An overview of the UK aerospace economic and political environment, describes the UK economic and political context as well as the UK aerospace industry. The chapter briefly portrays the development of trade associations in the UK and maps the national and regional trade associations currently active in the aerospace industry. Finally, it provides the rationale for choosing this particular context for the purposes of this research.

Chapter 4: Research approach, describes the research design and methods developed to tackle the research problem and the research questions. Moreover, it provides a detailed explanation of what data was collected, as well as when and how it was collected. It concludes by underlining how the data was analysed, and proposes the data structure, which forms the foundations of the findings chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings, presents and discusses the analysis and findings based on the data structure, which involves two main overarching aggregate dimensions. Therefore, the chapter is divided in two sections: the first section highlights trade associations' embeddedness in the institutional environment, whereas the second presents the findings related to trade associations' efforts to influence the policy-making process.

Chapter 6: Discussion, extends the narrative of the findings and discusses how the empirical findings relate to extant literature on corporate political activity and nonmarket strategy. The chapter is structured according to the three research questions.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, concludes the thesis by highlighting the contributions to knowledge as well as the implications of this study for trade association and firm managers, and for policymakers and politicians involved in the interactions with the business community. Finally, it highlights the limitations of this research and proposes a future research agenda.

Chapter 2 Reviewing the literature on corporate political activity and trade associations

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter is divided in three main sections. First, section 2.2 reviews the extant literature on corporate political activity in order to create a solid theoretical and conceptual foundation to this thesis. The notions of business-government relations, nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity are described, including the theoretical and historical development of this particular field of study. Second, section 2.3 extends the notions of corporate political activities to trade associations, as these are one of the main organisations through which firms undertake collective corporate political activities. Hence, the section begins by considering the reasons behind firms' choices to engage in the nonmarket context through individual and collective political activities. Whilst keeping in mind that literature on collective action is exceedingly extensive to be covered within this manuscript and that the unit of analysis are trade associations as organisations in their own right, it is nevertheless necessary to understand the core reasons that drive firms to work in co-operation with other organisations, and eventually become members of trade associations. Subsequently, the key intermediary organisations that pervade the social, political, and regulatory arenas will be contemplated, as well as trade associations' main characteristics, their roles in the business-government relations discourse, and their political activities. Finally, the chapter ends with section 2.4, which highlights the research gaps and provides the research questions that will be answered within this thesis. Hence, the literature review is developed in a 'funnel shape' as it begins broadly when considering political activities and nonmarket strategy generally, and ends by narrowing these concepts down to a specific organisation, i.e. trade associations.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 and as will be reiterated in the following chapters, this study draws on insights stemming from different disciplines and theoretical frameworks that have been used to analyse political activities and trade associations. Whilst this openness is advantageous for the researcher as it promotes a richer understanding of distinctive nuances and perspectives, it is nonetheless key to include and critique the literature that is directly pertinent to the study's scope. Hence, the review of extant literature is conducted according to the following process. Firstly, the researcher identified key papers

in the fields of CPA and NMS, as well as in research on trade associations. These papers were identified thanks to the researcher's prior knowledge of corporate political activity, through an extensive search, as well as through in-depth discussions with leading scholars in these research fields (which continued during the entire research). Secondly, the bibliography of these papers was intensively analysed and new papers were found. This manual search led to the inclusion of a wider range of scholarly work in the literature review. As the objective of this literature review is to combine different discussions, i.e. on organisations' political activities and on the role and specificities of trade associations, the researcher searched for work in a wide range of scientific journals covering disciplines such as management, international business, public affairs, political geography, sociology and business history. Thirdly, given the limitations of this search approach, namely that some studies might have been missed, the researcher identified a list of key words. These key words were used in management databases such as Business Source Complete (EBSCO) and ABI/INFORM Complete (ProQuest), available from Locate; Coventry University's library online search tool.

This process, which was undertaken iteratively and throughout the PhD as new work was added to the literature review, generated a comprehensive list of papers, both published and unpublished (e.g. forthcoming papers) in peer-reviewed journals, as well as books and conference proceedings. Nevertheless, only studies that were directly relevant, instructive towards understanding the specific field of enquiry, and which offered a recognised contribution were included in the literature review. Other work, which was nonetheless helpful for the researcher to gain a broad understanding was not included in this thesis.

2.2 Outline of corporate political activity

To fully comprehend the features that characterise the dynamic interactions between private and public actors, it is key to acknowledge the notions, concepts and theoretical lenses that have been used to investigate corporate political activity as this field highlights organisations' actions, procedures and behaviour in the interaction with the political, legal and regulatory environment. These notions emphasise organisations' participation in the political, legislative, normative and regulative processes. Corporate political activities can be considered as a distinct segment of a firm's global strategy and according to

several scholars (e.g. Baron 2016; Hillman, Zardkoohi, and Bierman 1999; Hillman and Wan 2005; Holburn and Vanden Bergh 2008; Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002) they can have significant effects on a company's value, market and economic performance. In sharp contrast, other academics have expressed the view that political activities could have detrimental (Puck, Rogers, and Mohr 2013) and negative consequences on public policy outcomes and firm performance (e.g. Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003; Hadani and Schuler 2013; Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016; Hersch, Netter, and Pope 2008). Rajwani and Liedong (2015) argue that diverse perspectives on the outcomes of corporate political activities can be partly explained by the different environments in which these activities are implemented. They point out that the external environment has a key role on firms' choice and approach to political action, as well as on the outcome.

Companies operating within a broad variety of different industries and sectors - including energy, defence, aerospace, telecommunications, pharmaceutical, financial and extractive - incorporate political activities in the design and development of their overall strategy and intervene in the political and regulatory arenas for a variety of reasons (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013). The reaction to institutional pressure, the necessity to reduce general environmental or political uncertainty, which can lead to an increase in transaction costs, are amongst the main drivers that affect the implementation of such activities (Hillman, Zardkoohi, and Bierman 1999). Moreover, the influence that policy and regulations have on firms, as well as their willingness to change the rules of competition, are additional reasons that may drive firms towards an involvement in public procedures (e.g. Keim and Baysinger 1988; Mahon and McGowan 1998).

Notwithstanding that any firm can undertake political activities, the costs of entering and operating in the social and political arena are substantial and not all firms have the appropriate resources or are necessarily aware of the importance of nonmarket action. Companies that operate in heavily regulated industries, have strong institutional links and are highly dependent on government - i.e. in terms of contracts and sales - will probably have a strong tendency to undertake political action and participate in the policy process (Hillman and Hitt 1999; Mitchell, Hansen, and Jepsen 1997). Stressing this point, Bonardi, Hillman, and Keim state "firms are most likely to engage in political activity when government significantly affects their business" (2005: 397). Schuler's (1996) analysis of the steel industry in the US is perfectly in line with this statement as it

demonstrates how great levels of institutional interdependence affect companies operating in this particular sector. The European airline industry is another ideal example as it features high levels of regulation and institutional control and exhibits a strong private involvement in the political arena (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013). Similarly, the historical background of the global aerospace industry, and the particular development of key firms, provides a clear illustration for this argumentation[3].

Furthermore, firms will undertake political action to moderate political and environmental risk (Frynas and Mellahi 2003; Keillor, Wilkinson, and Owens 2005), and though this could occur within any institutional context it is mostly common in developing countries[4] (Khanna, Palepu, and Sinha 2005). Scholars (e.g. Henisz and Zelner 2010; Puck, Rogers, and Mohr 2013) agree that business operations in emerging markets present an augmented level of risk and propose that firms should acknowledge the nonmarket arena and develop appropriate political strategies. Despite these distinctions, Schuler (1996) argues that a firm's competitive advantage could be adversely affected if it does not consider the importance of political resources and the political environment.

It is important to highlight that in many industries the successful engagement with decision-makers is as necessary as success in the business environment, to the extent that relations with public institutions can substantially alter firm benefits and economic profits. Thus, having access to the political arena enables companies to "increase overall market size, gain an advantage related to industry competition, and increase their bargaining power relative to suppliers and customers" (Hillman and Hitt 1999: 826-827). Through political activities firms have the ability to unlock market opportunities, enter new markets as well as provide benefits to the entire industry (Baron 1999). Finally, the employment of political activities and the effective design of a structured political strategy could be the only method to preserve and obtain connections with key stakeholders that do not necessarily operate within industry boundaries (Baron 1999).

[3] Airbus and Boeing are two key examples that demonstrate how strong interdependencies with public institutions have assisted their development leading to the duopoly that can be seen nowadays.

[4] Khanna, Palepu, and Sinha (2005: 4) describe that emerging and developing countries are characterised by institutional voids, which can be defined as environments in which there is an "absence of specialized intermediaries, regulatory systems, and contract-enforcing mechanisms".

2.2.1 Defining corporate political activity

The literature provides various definitions of corporate political activity, which can vary from being very broad and general to narrow and specific. Epstein's influential work (1969:142) argues that "political competition follows in the wake of economic competition", indicating that firms could benefit from interactions with entities and structures not strictly related with business-market operations, such as political institutions. Earlier studies analysed the impact of policy outcomes on the business environment, focusing on the relations between business and public policy, portraying firms as merely reactive (Oliver 1991). In sharp contrast, research addressing a management perspective, directed the emphasis towards the firm, acknowledging its role as a primary and proactive stakeholder in the political environment, thus contributing to the definition of public policy (Preston 1986). The shift towards firm-specific matters has provoked a growth in the analysis and research of scholars towards firms' political strategies and actions (e.g. Getz 1997; Shaffer 1995). The investigations on corporate political activity have been prompted to better understand how organisations compete and perform in the political arena (Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004).

A common and widespread definition defines corporate political activity as corporate attempts to shape government policy in ways favourable to the firm (Baysinger 1984; Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004). In addition, Baysinger claims that "the ultimate objective of business political activities is to influence electoral, legislative, regulatory processes so that the outcomes of these processes better reflect the internal goals of the organisation" (1984: 249). Shaffer (1995) concentrates on firm responses to government regulation and how public policies influence a firm's competitive environment. Here, responses are not considered as mere reactive behaviour towards government intervention, but also as active and proactive efforts in influencing the decision-making process. Lawrence (1999: 186) argues that political activities are institutional strategies that organisations can use to realize competitive advantages and shape rules to their own benefit. Similarly, Baron broadens the view and aligns political activities to political strategy, defining the latter as "a concerted pattern of actions taken in the nonmarket environment to create value by improving its overall performance" (1995: 47). The concept of nonmarket environment is significant in Baron's work as he underlines that the discipline of strategic management acknowledges that a firm's external environment

is composed of two distinct segments: the market and the nonmarket environment (Figure 1). The first is generally characterised by relations amongst firms, suppliers and customers which include economic transaction, whereas the second relates to interactions between companies and nonmarket actors such as governments and public institutions (Baron 1997: 291).

Figure 1: A depiction of the market and nonmarket environments

Source: Liedong et al. (2015)

A crucial insight in Baron's work is that firms can pursue competitive advantage through political actions, even if ultimately the alignment of both strategies is necessary (Baron 1997). One of the critical differences between market and nonmarket strategies is that whilst in the first collective action in collusive terms is not admitted, in the latter it is a common form of participation (Boddewyn and Brewer 1994) and permitted by the law (Baron 1995). De Figueiredo (2009: 1) argues that corporate political strategy is "a natural extension of the traditional tools of strategic management" and that it "addresses how a firm interacts with political institutions to change the competitive landscape and obtain competitive advantage". Additionally, Baron (1999), Marsh (1998) and Schuler (1996) state that some of the nonmarket actions can have positive effects for other companies; to the extent they can provide the entire industry with benefits (Liedong et al. 2015: 417). Moreover, Lawton and Rajwani (2012) stress that effective implementation of nonmarket strategies can lead companies to competitive advantage. However, if not dealt with appropriately, they can occasionally lead to counterproductive effects.

A curious yet key feature in Baron's (1999) work, which is morally[5] aligned with the concept of a general distribution of benefits, is mentioning that nonmarket strategies should be characterised by a responsible involvement in the public process. It is important to recognise this aspect as it provides the sensitivity and awareness that managers and companies may not simply be motivated by concerns of competitive advantage but also by personal views and gains of business leaders. These notions are in line with Mantere, Pajunen, and Lamberg (2009) who contend that the ethical dimension should not be excluded in the examination of political activities. This perspective is key when the consequences towards the overall external setting are considered as a firm's political behaviour could be oriented towards a sole individualistic outcome, i.e. profit maximisation, harming the entire social and business environment. Martinez and Kang (2014) provide an insightful description of how the integration of market and nonmarket strategies is fundamental for firms' management of the external environment. It must be highlighted that political activities are only one type of strategy that firms, and other business organisations can undertake in the nonmarket environment, as corporate social responsibility (CSR) is another approach that entails interactions with social, political and economic actors (e.g. Den Hond et al. 2014; Matten and Moon 2008; Scherer and Palazzo 2011).

Getz (1997: 32-33) deliberately narrows the definition, isolating actions from strategies and defines corporate political activities as "any deliberate firm action intended to influence governmental policy or process". Getz's definition diverges from other scholars (e.g. Shaffer 1995) as it explicitly states that political actions are not to be considered as responses to government action, rather as a specific political behaviour. Getz (1997) presents an additional distinction emphasising how political strategy and political action do not correspond, as the latter could be advanced without an attentive consideration of the global business strategy. Moreover, a firm's political strategy implementation requires the inclusion of its resources, and Mahon (1989: 51-52) describes it as "the organisation's resources to integrate objectives and to undertake coherent actions directed

[5] Building on disciplines including sociology and psychoanalysis, Mantere, Pajunen, and Lamberg (2009) underline the importance of concepts such as political virtues and ethics whilst considering political behaviour and corporate political activities.

toward the political, social, and legal environment in order to secure either permanent or temporary advantage and influence over other actors in the process".

In evident contrast with Mitnick (1993) who does not include any mutual benefit in the business-government relationship, but rather underlines how political behaviour is deliberately directed towards private ends, Useem (1984) argues that the relation is characterised by a bi-directional process. This two-way relationship indicates that on one side, businesses try and influence public decisions, and on the other side institutional actors have the capability to alter the business environment.

Reviewing the literature on corporate political activity is challenging due to the different theoretical lenses and different levels of analysis. Nonetheless, Shaffer (1995), Getz (1997; 2001), Hillman, Keim, and Schuler (2004), Skippari et al. (2005), and Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani (2013) have skilfully managed to critically review extant literature in order to generate clearer understanding around the topic. Their work has offered scholars and practitioners an integrated framework of the widespread concepts surrounding the areas of nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity. Hillman, Keim, and Schuler (2004) categorise previous work by firstly, concentrating on the antecedents, secondly, highlighting the different activities, and thirdly, describing the possible results and outcomes in implementing these activities. Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani (2013) succeeded in classifying the broad range of literature in three major perspectives: first, resources and capabilities; second, institutions and political environment; third, they concentrate their attention on understanding how firms' involvement in the political arena can translate in performance outcomes, such as policy change and financial profits. Rajwani and Liedong (2015) further attempt to review the most important literature on political activities, focusing on the impact on firm value in different international environments.

2.2.2 Processes and concepts

The antecedents of corporate political activity have gained profound relevance amongst academic literature and can be considered as a natural starting point in the consideration of this field of study. Several approaches have been used in the examination of internal and external factors that influence corporate political activities. For instance, Boddewyn and Brewer argue that "political behaviour does not develop in a vacuum; it is conditioned

by firm, industry and environmental factors" (1994: 121). Whereas Getz (1997: 60), underlines five levels: firm, industry, environmental, issue and relational. Hillman, Keim, and Schuler (2004) have categorised the conditioning factors in four levels: firm, industry, issue and institutional. The first level considers structural, organisational or operational firm characteristics that are crucial in managing the political environment. Two key assumptions for this level are that firstly, there is a deliberate organisational strategic decision to undertake political activities directed towards achieving benefits for the firm. Secondly, that the decision is based on specific resources (Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004).

Examining the firm level, strategic management scholars (e.g. Barney, Wright, and Ketchen 2001; Wernerfelt 1984) claim that internal features have a key role on a company's political success. This view can be associated to the resource-based view (RBV), which has gained ample resonance within the analysis of firms' political activities (e.g. McWilliams, Van Fleet, and Cory 2002). The resources that should be considered comprise firm size, firm dependency on government, firm slack, diversification level, and ownership (e.g. Hadani 2012; Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004). Firm size is a critical feature as it has a considerable impact on the design and execution of political activities (Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011; Rehbein and Schuler 1999). Large firms will have greater tangible and intangible resources[6] at their disposal and may be able to act independently (Lawton, Doh, and Rajwani 2014). Furthermore, large firms have sophisticated public policy necessities and will be more inclined to act politically as changes in policy or regulations will have strong consequences on them (e.g. Epstein 1969; Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002). Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman (2006) underline how firm specific political resources are critical in achieving first mover advantages. On the other side of the relationship, governments and institutions, will value large firms' participation: firstly, because of their significance and weight in relation to issues pertinent to the whole country, including the strategic importance to national economy (e.g. number of employees) and to national security (e.g. firms which produce security and defence related products). Secondly, because large firms have the financial resources (e.g. in terms

[6] Barney, Wright, and Ketchen (2001) describe tangible resources as physical and organisational (e.g. organisational processes and routines), and intangible resources (e.g. information and manager's experience).

of subsidising parties and politicians, creating specific offices and departments that relate with institutions) or technical information, that are fundamental for the policy-making process. In terms of the latter, business can help governments to avoid drafting ineffective or detrimental policies (Grant 2000).

Dependency on government is another prominent driver that strongly defines a firm's political behaviour and strategy (e.g. Hansen and Mitchell 2000; Hadani 2012; Hillman and Hitt 1999; Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002). It is a particularly relevant factor in the aerospace industry, as this sector has historically been distinguished by a close connection between companies and national governments, particularly in terms of regulations. Similarly, government sales, intended as the share of profits that firms derive from selling their products and services to public institutions (e.g. government procurement) can have important effects in terms of political action. This feature could lead the firm to a concrete dependency towards governments, which will need to be managed with the implementation of effective political activities (e.g. Burt, Mackay, and Perchard 2013; Hart 2001; Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011). The notion of path-dependence stresses the negative relation with institutional actors, which could lead the firm into obligations and detrimental outcomes (Barnes, Gartland, and Stack 2004). Furthermore, scholars (e.g. Schuler 1999) have argued that the level of exports is another key determinant in firm's choice to operate in the political environment. Again, this characteristic is extremely relevant to the UK aerospace industry given the high level of industry exports (Rhodes 2017).

In terms of the industry level, extant literature underlines how industry factors have an impact on the development of corporate political activities. Stemming from Porter's (1991) analysis on how performance and competitive advantage is given by industry competitiveness, scholars (e.g. Boddewyn and Brewer 1994; Getz 1997; Hillman and Keim 1995; Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002) have underlined how industry features such as size, profitability, concentration, structure and level of regulation affect firms' political behaviour, activities and strategy. With regards, to nonmarket strategies Bonardi et al. (2006) underline how the attractiveness of a particular market will have an effect on the political activities of firms, thus on their performance. In terms of industry concentration, there are contrasting views in relation to the benefits and firms' level of engagement in political activities. Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer (2002) argue that

companies operating in concentrated industries will be inclined to participate in the public policy process as well as combine different tactics to influence it. The opposite view suggests that several existing studies fail to present a well-defined methodological approach (Grier, Munger, and Roberts 1991), accurate measurement and consistent results (Hansen, Mitchell, and Drope 2005).

As previously mentioned, sectors and industries that are strategically relevant and feature high levels of institutional intervention will be characterised by companies with strong involvement in the political and nonmarket arena, as demonstrated by in-depth investigations of the British aluminium industry (Perchard 2012), the U.S. high-tech and communications industry (Hart 2007), as well as the U.S. steel industry (Schuler 1996). Likewise, the aerospace industry features significant levels of business-government interaction and is considered as an economic and military strategic industry (Hartley 2014). These notions will be covered in more detail in Chapter 3. Moreover, examples of institutional involvement include strategic support of 'national champions', overprotection of the industry from foreign competition and ad-hoc regional and national policies. The interrelation between private and public spheres in the aerospace industry has culminated in international governmental disputes, such as the Airbus and Boeing WTO case[7].

Furthermore, diverse scholarly work focuses on issue factors as determinants of corporate political activities. Vogel (1996) brings forward the notion that the salience of a specific matter will be a principal factor to condition the involvement in the nonmarket arena. A noteworthy analogy can be made with the notion of political salience[8] examined by scholars such as Bonardi and Keim (2005), Culpepper (2011), and Schuler and Rehbein (1997). This concept posits that firms' political behaviour is highly influenced by external pressure stemming from public policies; the more companies are affected by a particular policy the more they will be inclined to develop political activities.

[7] Boeing and Airbus, started a legal contention in 2004 within the World Trade Organisation, concerning financial support they were receiving from their respective governments. Both companies accused each other of altering competition (Newhouse 2008).

[8] Culpepper (2011) introduces the concept of 'quiet politics', in which he underlines that managers are able to lobby more effectively when particular issues are not broadly discussed within the public domain.

Lastly, the fourth level appertains to the institutional features that influence political activity formulation. These features are extremely relevant, as they constitute the context in which companies operate, as well as define firms' political opportunities, for example, nations with weak institutions will enable firms to operate more easily within the political arena (North 1990). In the field of strategic management, Peng (2002) has been a strong promoter in acknowledging the importance of institutions in order to understand firms' means towards competitive advantage. Peng et al. (2009) define this perspective as the third pillar of the strategy tripod. This view is necessary to grasp how diverse environments and their features can influence a firm's nonmarket behaviour and strategy formulation. It has been highlighted that firms adopt different political activities according to the different environments in which they operate (e.g. Wright et al. 2005). This is a critical aspect, and Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani (2012) point out that frequently, companies fail to acknowledge the prominence of institutions and how to interact with them appropriately, leading to the formulation of ineffective strategies. General Electric's failed acquisition of Honeywell International in 2001 (*European Commission 2004/134/EC*) and British Airways' lost alliance with American Airlines in the late 90's (Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2012: 27; Kyrou 2000) are perfect examples of failures to consider the different institutional levels and peculiar features characterizing them[9].

2.2.3 Approaches to political action

The strategic behaviour and political actions through which firms can relate with policymakers have been analysed and categorised by several scholars. Weidenbaum (1980) considers three main approaches to the political arena, which differ in terms of the firm being active or reactive to public policy: passive reaction, positive anticipation and proactive public policy shaping. The first, as the name emphasises, is characterised by a strong passive conduct to changes in public policy. In this case, firms tend to wait for variations in policy that affect them and if necessary modify their operations. Boddewyn and Brewer (1994) refer to strategies that entail compliance or circumvention. The second features a higher involvement, as the firm will actively monitor the political environment

[9] Kyrou (2000) describes in great detail how Bob Ayling former CEO of British Airways who resigned in 2000, following a dispute regarding the acquisition of take-off and landing slots at Heathrow Airport, didn't acknowledge the EU's institutional level. Hence, the manager failed to interact and relate appropriately with EU institutions as he solely focused on the UK's regulatory framework.

so that it is able to foresee change and adapt its operations and strategy. Keim and Hillman argue that following this approach firms attempt to direct regulation towards a business opportunity (2008: 51). The latter implies the greatest level of participation, as the firm will proactively endeavour to influence the public policy process. Moreover, Keim and Hillman (2008) contend that firms undertaking the first two approaches and not participating directly will concede other firms more liberty in conveying their own interests. Similarly, Baysinger (1984) lists quasi identical approaches of how firms can be politically active: the first is domain management where a company pursues private interests; the second is domain defence where it tries to handle public policy; and the third is domain maintenance where it tries to proactively influence public policy. Oliver and Holzinger (2008) enlarge the array of different approaches towards the political environment as they present four strategies: proactive, defensive, anticipatory and reactive. However, in contrast with Keim and Hillman (2008) their theoretical perspective concentrates on the effective management as opposed to any general approach that a firm could undertake.

Hillman and Hitt's (1999) influential paper concentrates exclusively on how firms proactively engage in political behaviour, implying that they have deliberately chosen to undertake political activities instead of solely reacting to public interference. The authors propose a decision tree model of political strategy formulation and suggest that firms undertake two main decisions before they choose the specific strategy, which are influenced by internal and external variables. Firstly, the approach to political strategy, which can be divided in two tactics: transactional, when firms interact with policy makers on matters that specifically affect them, and relational, when businesses continuously undertake political activities and build relationships with institutions that span over different issues and an indefinite period of time. This will eventually become useful when a particular topic arises. The latter is particularly relevant as it implies that the firm is aware of the importance of the nonmarket arena and incorporates the political activities in its overall strategy. Moreover, firms that engage in durable relationships with institutions cultivate and develop political or relational capital (e.g. Hadani and Schuler 2013; Shaffer and Hillman 2000). Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani (2012: 32) provide a definition of nonmarket capital as, "the ability of firms to influence political and social actors and agendas using reputation, relationships, expertise, and finance". This approach

is clearly influenced by the type of institution that firms are relating with; for example, the interaction with elected institutions will have to be different than the interaction with regulatory agencies as the latter are not bound by elections and temporality but develop policy on a continuous basis (Holburn and Vanden Bergh 2008).

Secondly, the participation level, which underlines that firms are confronted with the choice of an individual versus a collective approach to corporate political action. Hillman and Hitt (1999: 831) highlight how this option can be associated to the competitive and cooperative strategies within the market strategy research. There are several approaches to collective action and the most common are through membership of trade associations and industry groups (e.g. Barnett 2006a; Bouwen 2002; Dür and Mateo 2012; Jacomet 2005). The aerospace industry is particularly relevant in this sense as consortiums and collective action are common in the economic marketplace as well as in the political one. Collective action is particularly beneficial as it enables the development of economies of scale in political action: firms do not have to constantly monitor and relate with policymakers individually. There are several factors that influence this choice and anticipated benefits and firm specific resources can be considered as key features, as individual action is extremely onerous, and most firms will not have the ability to act individually (Cook and Fox 2000). The projected outcome in terms of private or collective benefits will influence the approach (Keim and Zeithaml 1986). De Figueiredo and Tiller (2001) argue that large companies are inclined to undertake individual activities to prevent other companies accessing private information. Due to their size, large companies can profit from higher proportions of the political benefits even if these are allocated across the entire industry. Barron's (2011a) conceptual paper builds a bridge between cultural dimensions and corporate political activity and argues that the participation level is influenced by a culture's individualistic or collectivistic nature.

The vast literature on corporate political activities has underlined an extensive array of actions that can be implemented in the nonmarket domain including; lobbying, constituency building, financial contributions, coalition building, advocacy advertising, executive testimony (e.g. Baron 1999; Bonardi, Hillman, and Keim 2005; Getz 1997; Hillman and Keim 1995; Hillman and Hitt 1999; Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004; Keim and Zeithaml 1986; Lord 2000). Hillman and Hitt's (1999) seminal work defines three broad strategy groupings: information, financial and constituency building (Table 1). In

comparison, Keim and Zeithaml (1986) propose the following: constituency building, coalition building, advocacy, campaign contributions and lobbying. Hillman, Zardkoohi, and Bierman (1999: 69) state "all these strategies are designed to help the given firm achieve access to key influentials and/or to directly influence policy outcomes". Building on this view, Schuler, Rehbein, Cramer (2002) argue that to effectively participate in nonmarket action a combination of diverse activities will be implemented.

Table 1: Corporate political activity strategies

Source: Hillman and Hitt (1999)

2.2.4 Historical development

The development of the interactions between business and institutional actors can be associated to the development of capitalism and of corporations, in the sense that the growth and the increasing power and influence of private companies is aligning them to the same level as political and social institutions. Vogel describes this as the establishment of "non-governmental institutions" (1996: 147) that have become fundamental in managing critical and broad issues. Nevertheless, Lawton, Doh, and Rajwani (2014)

highlight that prior to the development of modern capitalism in Europe, the interests of private and public entities were closely linked.

During the 1960s, organisations acknowledged the growing role of public policy and its influence on operations and structure - which consequently - shaped their corporate behaviour (Gale and Buchholz 1987). However, it must be acknowledged that the entire twentieth century has been characterised by greater institutional influence in organisations' environment (Hart 2007). Consequently, business actors recognised how the organisation of the economy, hence the competitive environment could be altered by government's intervention, leading to uncertainty and loss of control over strategic resources (Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004). Similarly, local and national macro-economic policies, industrial strategies, and other institutional initiatives could have enormous effects on firms' competitive advantage and profitability (e.g. Kim 2008; MacAvoy 1992; Murtha and Lenway 1994; Van Schendelen and Jackson 1987). Furthermore, companies acknowledged that public policy, legislation and regulations could alter the size and structure of markets, as well as change the cost structure of the industry and affect the demand for products and services (Hillman and Hitt 1999; Mahon and Murray 1981). For example, during the 1980s, the emphasis of pursuing liberalisation in the European air transport industry had been to alter the structure of the market in terms of regulations and general organisation (Holmes and McGowan 1997).

Subsequently, the 1980s saw a rise in corporate political activities in a variety of different industries (e.g. Gale and Buchholz 1987; Keim and Baysinger 1988; Mahon 1989). This feature can be associated with the intervention of public influence in the business domain that evolved in an increase of regulations that highly affected firms' activities and structure (Keillor, Wilkinson, and Owens 2005), as well as economic and financial outcomes (e.g. Lenway and Rehbein 1991; Weidenbaum 1980). Several episodes and events saw an increase in government influence, however one of the most important is the global financial crisis that started in 2007, which has had overwhelming effects on numerous national economies, has forced governments and supranational institutions to undertake actions that have influenced the business environment and economic affairs (e.g. Hultén, Barron, and Bryson 2012). This has led to an increase in the importance of firms to operate in the non-market environment. Hadani, Dahan, and Bonardi (2012)

argue that, in the US, there has been a rise in firms' political activities since 2008, because of the increased economic involvement of federal and state institutions.

Moreover, the development of newly formed national, international and supranational political and regulatory institutions is generating new environments in which firms can undertake nonmarket action (Keillor, Wilkinson, and Owens 2005; Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013). The formation of the European single market as well as the formation and development of the European Institutions has fostered these interactions (e.g. Coen 1997; Richardson 2000; Wilts and Quittkat 2004). Following the upsurge of such institutions, Woll (2007) stresses that firms' political activities are increasingly directed towards supranational institutions such as the WTO, leading to an involvement and interaction on different levels. Lawton and McGuire (2005) underline how rulings stemming from the WTO, affected the strategic choices of European companies in the textile and chemical industries. Thus, an in-depth examination of the dynamics that govern the relationship between the public and private sectors must entail different analytical levels as well as an international perspective (Blumentritt 2003; Mantere, Pajunen, and Lamberg 2009).

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a considerable growth in the literature on this particular field of enquiry (Griffin et al. 2001) as well as a shift in the examination of corporate political activities (Getz 2001). Previous academics, especially in the management domain such as Epstein (1969) had concentrated in describing the phenomenon without developing theoretical concepts, whereas these two decades were characterised by the endeavours to analyse these activities through the lenses of social science theories. Subsequently at the turn of the century, researchers analysed areas which had not been examined in great detail in previous literature, such as the activities of small companies (e.g. Bengtson, Pahlberg, and Pourmand 2009; Cook and Barry 1993; 1995; Cook and Fox 2000; Hadjikhani, Pourmand, and Thilenius 2009) or institutional contexts such as the European Union (e.g. Barron and Hultén 2011; Beyers 2004; Bouwen 2002; Broscheid and Coen 2003; Coen 1997; 2007; Greenwood 2002).

According to Bonardi, Holburn, and Vanden Bergh (2006) and Vogel (1996), research and synthesis on firms' participation in the political process has evidently increased, especially during the post-war period. This growth can be ascribed to several features,

such as: the increase in the power of businesses as well as their public accountability, the intensified institutional interference in several aspects of the market environment and the larger accessibility of data on corporate political activities (Vogel 1996). Globalisation and MNEs' internationalisation processes are additional sources regarding the growing attention to research this particular area (e.g. Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman 2006).

A further reason for the expansion of research in this particular period has been the development of departments within organisations that dealt with the external regulatory and socio-political environment. Griffin et al.'s (2001) work focuses on the role of public affairs [10] and underlines the different contexts that public affairs relate to such as government, associations and the wider society including the public opinion. Moreover, their bibliographic review draws further attention to how the literature on this area developed, beginning from the 1960s and 1970s to an extensive amount of work which attempted to develop theoretical frameworks leading up to the turn of the century.

Globalisation is playing a key role in the development of corporate political activities (Windsor 2007), as firms become increasingly politically active outside their domestic political settings (Barron 2011b). The growth of multinational companies and the expansion of activities into new business markets have forced them to interact with different social and political environments, which has led to the development of completely new dynamics in the government-business relations' dichotomy. Keillor and Hult (2004) argue that international firms and their operations are subject to high levels of intervention from nonmarket actors. Consequently, they highlight how firm characteristics and market conditions influence the ability to undertake political activities.

The European continent has seen an increase in the number of multinational companies originating from different parts of the world. The increase in foreign direct investments and choosing Europe as a major hub for their subsidiaries and their operations is leading companies to understand the diverse processes that characterise policy, decision making (McGuire, Lindeque, and Suder 2012) and how to relate with institutions (Hamada 2007).

[10] Griffin et al. (2001: 11) indicate that there are several terms that can be juxtaposed to the area of business-government relations and include: corporate affairs, public affairs, external affairs, external relations, government relations and public relations. This elucidation is necessary as different disciplines and strands of literature will refer to corporate political activities using different terms.

Although this research concentrates on the UK context it is necessary to mention that there is a vast number of researchers (e.g. Khanna and Palepu 2000; Khanna, Palepu, and Sinha 2005; Henisz and Zelner 2010) that have focused on emerging markets. Emerging markets are a significant context to analyse since public-policy decisions are characterised by very volatile and subjective features (Lawton, Doh, and Rajwani 2014). Moreover, these environments are particularly important when considering firms political strategies, because even though they may present significant risks they offer several opportunities in terms of economic performance and political freedom (Henisz and Zelner 2010; Khanna, Palepu, and Sinha 2005).

2.2.5 Theoretical foundations

Corporate political activity is characterised by an interdisciplinary nature and is hence present in various research fields (e.g. Frynas, Child, and Tarba 2017; Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004). Its notions have informed diverse streams of scholarly and managerial literature and are examined in diverse academic fields of study such as international business, business history, economics, political science, sociology and strategic management (e.g. Barley 2007; Coen, Grant, and Wilson 2010; Decker 2011; Eising 2007; Gourvish 2003; Grier, Munger, and Roberts 1991; Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004; Masters and Keim 1985). Consequently, academics have examined corporate political activities through the theoretical lenses of their own disciplines. Within the economics domain, academics such as Salamon and Siegfried (1977) have focused their attention towards the examination of industry characteristics such as firm concentration. Dissimilarly, political science studies have focused on distinctive political features relating to the political and institutional frameworks (e.g. Grier and Munger 1993; Coen 2007; Eising 2007). Strategic management scholars such as (e.g. Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004; Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013; Shaffer and Hillman 2000) have concentrated on the antecedents and on emphasising that the efficacy of political action as well as company-specific performance should be further examined. The latter feature has witnessed several difficulties related to the measurement of performance outcomes.

The following section does not aim to comprehensively cover each theoretical perspective in its entirety but emphasize how different theories that are applied in the field of corporate political activity target different levels of analysis. Clear examples of this

argument can be exposed considering the resource-based perspectives, which concentrate on the internal organisational level (e.g. Bonardi, Holburn, and Vanden Bergh 2006; Dahan 2005b; Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman 2006) stakeholder theory, and resource dependence theory (e.g. Hillman and Keim 2001; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978), which concentrate on different players across environments, and institutional theory that brings into the equation broad, national and international institutional features (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013).

Getz (1997; 2001) underlines the main disciplines that have acted as academic umbrellas to several theories: political science, management, economics and political economy, and sociology. The theories that stem from these two papers include: interest group theory, resource dependency, agency, exchange, institutional, behavioural theory of the firm, collective action, public choice, and transaction cost theories. Griffin et al. (2001: 10) refine the selection of literatures and include amongst others international public affairs, corporate public affairs, political involvement activities and political strategy.

Building on Hillman and Hitt's (1999) and Hillman, Keim, and Schuler's (2004) work, Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani (2013) categorise the extant literature and theoretical concepts in four main areas. Their literature review differentiates three "main disciplinary domains" to present a structured approach to the examination of corporate political activities (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013: 89). The first two domains are based on the resource-based view and institutional theory, whilst the latter specifically focuses on the national political environments, culture and risk.

Academics in the field of strategic management (e.g. Barney 1991; Barney, Wright, and Ketchen 2001; Wernerfelt 1984) stress that a company's competitive advantage is determined by internal resources and capabilities in market environments. In relation to resources employed in the corporate political context several scholars have concentrated on internal (e.g. Boddewyn and Brewer 1994; Epstein 1969; Fainsod 1940; Rehbein and Schuler 1999) and external (Baron 1995) resources and presented how companies employ their political resources to maximise their profits (McWilliams, Van Fleet, and Cory 2002). Fainsod (1940) describes the importance of resources previously to the use of the resource-based theory not exclusively related to market and business operations, underlining that industries are able to affect policy and regulation processes by employing

specific resources. These resources can be divided in three general categories: financial, human and political.[11] Dahan (2005b) develops a broader selection of political resources: expertise, financial, relational and organisational resources, reputation, public image, support of stakeholders and recreational skill, and within this classification internal and external resources can be clearly defined, whilst John, Rajwani, and Lawton (2015: 118) refer to organisational, relational, public image, reputation, and financial. Rehbein and Schuler (1995) assert that resources are critical in the definition of how firms react to the external environment, whilst several scholars (Hillman and Hitt 1999; Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004; Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013) stress that the effectiveness of corporate political activities is highly reliant on firms' resources. As previously mentioned, large firms will have more impact on shaping public policy, and Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer (2002) link resources possessed by large firms to political activities. Bonardi (2011: 247) considers political resources as "a set of unique political assets and skills that might prepare firms to participate in policy debates, face the rivalry of competing interest groups and shape policy decisions". The author challenges existing conceptions on the pure adaptation of RBV to the field of political activities, as political resources cannot be simply bound to the criteria of market resources.

A serious effort to connect the RBV theory with the notion of corporate political activities has been proposed by Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani (2013) who examine and highlight the concept of dynamic political capabilities. The authors indicate that there is a lack of qualitative studies examining this concept within the nonmarket context and on how companies develop their political capabilities in different contexts. Stemming from the RBV the "dynamic capabilities framework" has gained great resonance amongst strategic management scholars (Barreto 2010). Dynamic capabilities indicate the "ability of firms to maintain or create firm value by developing and deploying internal competencies that maximize congruence with the requirements of a changing environment" (Oliver and Holzinger 2008: 496-497). Hence, the critical notion is that of market (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000) and nonmarket (McWilliams, Van Fleet, and Cory 2002; Baron 1995;

[11] In Fainsod's (1940) description, financial resources can be considered as financial support to political campaigns; human, as the use of specific actors such as lobbyists and lawyers that have the technical capabilities and knowledge to effectively relate with decision makers; and political resources, which relate to the ability to build political coalitions.

Bonardi, Holburn, and Vanden Bergh 2006) change. In comparison, political capabilities refer to "the organisational and strategic activities by which senior representatives or acting representatives reconfigure, leverage and release political resources to achieve new resource configurations that enable the company to adapt to, anticipate or even shape changes in the corporate political environment" (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013: 230).

Closely linked to the notion of political capabilities, Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani (2013: 237) bring forward the importance of social networks and ties. Political networks, and relationships can affect a firm's performance by increasing its access to information, resources, and opportunities, which will be utilised to monitor or influence decision makers. Dahan, Doh, and Guay (2006) underline how MNC's can relate and interact with the institutional environment through political networks. Close ties and relationships with government officials, institutional representatives and decision makers can simplify the process of accessing the critical phases of policy-making as well as reducing the costs involved in these activities (Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman 2006; Hillman, Zardkoohi, and Bierman 1999). The relationships will be characterised by different features, although a critical element is the strength of the network, which depends on two factors: the regularity of interactions and the resources that are employed to build or maintain it.

Institutional theories are key in the investigation of corporate political activities as institutions are precisely where businesses direct their resources when trying to monitor or shape public policy. Therefore, it is important to recognise to what extent firms are embedded within their institutional context and to what extent the formal and informal institutions affect firms' political action and strategy (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013). Marquis and Raynard (2015) underline that there is a dearth of consideration towards the ways firms increase their competitive advantage through their strategic interaction with the institutional environment.

Hotho and Pedersen (2012) deliver a complete review of the different institutional theoretical branches that pertain to the field of international business and point out that there is a common understanding that three main approaches can be categorised: new-institutional economics, neo-institutional perspectives, and national business systems. The authors underline how the growing awareness to analyse institutions corresponded

with the rise of emerging markets and that different institutional perspectives refer to the different understanding and interpretation of what institutions are made of (Hotho and Pedersen 2012: 29).

The first lens is characterised by a strong connection with microeconomics and defines institutions as "the rules of the game in society, or more formally, as the human devised constraints that structure human interaction" (North 1990: 3). Keim and Hillman stress that institutions are considered as "humanly-created constraints that limit choices and shape the incentives of a society" (2008: 48). They can be divided in formal (laws, regulations and rules) and informal (norms, customs, culture and ethics), however this perspective concentrates on the former (Williamson 2000). The critical aspect within this theoretical framework is that uncertainty, mostly political and regulatory, can have significant effects on a firm's strategic decisions (Bonardi, Holburn, and Vanden Bergh 2006) and competitive advantage (Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2012).

The second is aligned to sociology and considers both typologies of institutions as it concentrates on organisational forms, practices and relationships. Hence, the concept of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) is central as it elucidates why firms become politically active and how they tend to converge due to institutional pressure. Hillman and Wan (2005) align institutional theory with political strategy and international business to underline how MNE's are affected from internal and external pressures. The authors highlight how the institutional lens is particularly relevant when the focus of a study is to understand how firms shape the institutional environment.

The third perspective, national business systems (Jackson and Deeg 2008; Khanna, Palepu, and Sinha 2005; Whitley 1999), examines the existence of specific, exclusive economic and institutional features, which contrast the homogenising forces of globalisation[12].

Within the strategic management literature, Peng (2002) proposed the institution-based view as a third pillar of the strategy tripod, which is composed of the RBV and the industry-based view. The institution-based view is significant as it proposes that firms'

[12] Tempel and Walgenbach (2007) attempt to find connections between the institutional theories, highlighting both the role of globalisation and that of national differences.

resources should be analysed whilst considering a given institutional setting. Peng et al. (2009) underline that firms' strategic choices are given by the dynamic interaction with institutions. Correspondingly, in the corporate political activity literature it is described how different institutional environments affect the formulation and implementation of political strategies (Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002) and relationships between firms and governments (Hillman and Keim 1995).

Resource-dependency theory is key to disciplines such as strategic management (e.g. Hillman 2005; Hillman, Withers, and Collins 2009; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978) as it has been used as central feature in strategy formulation (Getz 2001). It posits that an organisation and its relationship with other organisations are highly dependent on resources that arise from the external environment (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Hence, external forces and the external context are central for firms as these are not self-sufficient (Griffin and Dunn 2004), and these elements could lead to dependence and develop uncertainty, which are critical determinants of firm behaviour (Getz 2001). A key feature within this theoretical concept is that firms have the possibility to oppose and influence these forces.

Translating these notions to the field of political activities means that companies are dependent on other firms, decision makers, policy and regulations that will have an effect on their operations. Getz underlines that political activities do not have the power to moderate actual dependence; instead they "allow[s] the firm to reduce uncertainties related to the dependence, and thereby to reduce the likelihood that dependence will have negative effects on the firm" (2001: 313). In sharp contrast, Hillman, Withers, and Collins (2009) argue that firms are able to reduce dependence, as well as influence decision makers and policy to the extent of forging the external context, which would then be better aligned to their interests. The theory has been considered with regards to the various political strategies (Hillman and Hitt 1999) that companies can undertake. For example, high levels of dependency could lead to a relational and continuous interaction in time, whereas a low dependency could mean that firms approach policymakers on an issue-to-issue basis. Collective action, such as participation in trade associations could be suitable for firms that are located in the middle of this spectrum (Getz 2001).

An additional theoretical perspective is advanced by Barron (2011a) who acknowledges

the role of cultural dimensions in understanding corporate political activities. Building on Child's (2000) argument that extant research had not included cultural components, the scholar's efforts are directed towards aligning these two notions and presenting a conceptual framework. Although, previous research (e.g. Blumentritt 2003; Boddewyn 2007) has recognised the importance that political activities are increasingly becoming more global, there is still limited work that has focused on understanding the influences that national culture has on firms' political involvement in the nonmarket arena.

2.2.6 Overcoming theoretical rigidity and fragmentation

As evidenced the field of CPA is characterised by a multidisciplinary diversity and the adoption of a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives, which have been used to investigate organisations' participation in the socio-political and regulatory arenas. There have been notions which have managed to cross academic boundaries and find resonance amongst different disciplines; such as the establishment and growth of organisational structures to develop political action, and the conception that political activity is a valuable approach towards managing the societal and external context (e.g. Lawton and Rajwani 2015; Mellahi et al. 2016; Shaffer 1995). However, for the most part, the consequence to this fragmentation has been the lack of conceptual and methodological cohesion and the proposition of completely different approaches to this area of research, leading to the fragmentation of the topic and the absence of an "integrated understanding" (Dorbantu, Kaul, and Zelner 2017: 115). Consequently, scholars (e.g. Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2012; Van Schendelen 2002; Vogel 1996) have underlined the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach, as is the case of this research.

Research on CPA has been further constrained and "developed in silos" (e.g. Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016; Mellahi et al. 2016) by what could be defined as theoretical rigidity, whereby scholars have relied on adopting single theoretical perspectives. Undoubtedly, the various theoretical perspectives present different paradigms as well as strengths and weaknesses, however these should be viewed as complementary as the absence of one major theory and limited theoretical integration, scholars cannot rely on one optimal theory (Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011). Research on organisations' political activities is thus best understood by the adoption of multiple theoretical perspectives (e.g.

Barron 2013; Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016; Hillman and Wan 2005; Mellahi et al. 2016).

Hence, this research is in line with previous studies that have sought to integrate various lenses. For example, building on Hotho and Pedersen's (2012) work, Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani's (2012) main argument is that in order to comprehensively understand the features that characterise firms' political strategies that are directed towards the nonmarket environment it is necessary to combine the three theoretical dimensions with conventional strategy theory. The alignment of these different theories is helpful in capturing broad national and supranational perspectives as well as firm and industry specific features (e.g. Oliver 1997). Schuler (1999) and Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer (2002) argued that the interaction between internal and external factors should be analysed. Similarly, Wang et al. (2012) underline the complementarity between internal resources and the external environment institutions. In relation to resource-based views, Capron and Chatain (2008) argue that researchers which have focused on the RBV have not comprised sufficiently the external environment and that there is the need for additional research linking this theoretical framework and political activities. Griffin and Dunn (2004) integrate resource dependency theory with institutional theory to understand firms' allocation of resources, managers' commitment and structural features of the Public Affairs departments, whilst considering institutional pressures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

2.3 Conceptualising the role of trade associations

2.3.1 Collaboration in the political arena

A firm's decision to relate with the policy-making process and undertake political action individually or collectively is central towards the formulation and development of its corporate political activities and global strategy. Building on Olson's (1965) work, Hillman and Hitt (1999) refer to this decision as participation level, and include choices made by companies and by individuals working in them. Individual activities are characterised by a firm's solitary and independent action, whereas collective activities pertain to those actions that require collaboration amongst firms. Collective action among organisations is considered as a reality of growing importance given the necessity to collaborate in order to face contemporary economic, political and social issues

(Berkowitz and Dumez 2016). Collaborative efforts are a common trait in the nonmarket environment, and as Coen, Grant, and Wilson (2010: 16) argue, "delegation is the most typical response of business to the political environment", indicating that if firms want to be successful in modifying public policy they must act collectively.

Several scholars within the fields of business-government relations, nonmarket strategy, sociology, history, international business and political science have looked at the different tactics undertaken in the political arena and have investigated the reasons behind firms' individual and collective approaches. One of the main criticisms on work investigating the different approaches relates to the fact that this choice, rather than being viewed as "mutually reinforcing" (Coen 1997: 92) and substitutable and complementary (e.g. Baron 2016; Jia 2014; Jia and Mayer 2016; Minto 2016), is frequently viewed as mutually exclusive (Ozer and Lee 2009). Nonetheless, there are studies (e.g. Barnett 2006b; Coen 1997; 2007; Jacomet 2005; Pijnenburg 1998; Richardson 2000) that have focused on circumstances in which organisations undertake both types of activities. This latter perspective has exposed firms' opportunity to choose the most appropriate and effective approach – individual, collective or a combination of both. The determinants affecting the choice of individual and collective action are closely linked, and at times overlap, with the factors influencing the wider decision to engage in the political arena. Hence, these features may depend on the institutional framework, on firm and industry-specific characteristics, on specific issues, as well as on broader geographic, cultural and environmental features (Lawton, Doh, and Rajwani 2014).

An organisation's size and array of resources it possesses are amongst the key factors that can encourage collective political action (Lawton, Doh, and Rajwani 2014). Given the high costs of individual political activity, small firms will generally not be able to act independently, they will share their resources and lobbying costs with other firms, and often rely on trade associations (e.g. Bennett and Ramsden 2007; Cook and Fox 2000). In the context of public policy focused on reducing companies' environmental footprint, Collins and Roper (2005) contend that small firms do not possess the relative resources, capabilities and experience to deal with governmental regulation and to oppose this threat, they will tend to advocate their positions through trade associations. In contrast, Bengtson, Pahlberg, and Pourmand (2009) contend that small firms do not solely rely on intermediaries to influence political institutions and may play an independent role in the

political strategy discourse. It is nonetheless hard to disagree with the general notion that smaller firms will experience more difficulties in interacting with political actors than large firms, as the latter possess greater economic, financial and political resources and will be able to develop political capabilities (Lawton and Rajwani 2011). Large firms will thus be to simultaneously act individually, for example through establishing their own government affairs departments, or hiring external political consultants, and collectively with other firms (Bonardi 2011; Jacomet 2005). Moreover, firms that retain greater intangible resources, such as knowledge on how to gain access to and influence the policy process, will be able to act independently (Hillman and Hitt 1999). However, if the resources required for a particular outcome are held by several firms and are difficult to replicate within a single organisation, it will force them to act collectively (Minto 2016).

Additionally, a company's collective action may stem from the understanding that crucial resources and several types of capabilities[13] span firm boundaries, and interfirm linkages deliver a source of competitive advantage (Dyer and Singh 1998). Hence, large firms will tend to consider individual and collective approaches as complementary, and often will join various trade associations concurrently (e.g. Bennett and Ramsden 2007). Nevertheless, it must be considered that small firms will join several associations as well, as "substantial multiple memberships" will allow firms to meet their multiple needs by joining different associations (Bennett and Ramsden 2007: 51).

Bouwen (2002) stresses that even though larger firms are inclined to undertake political activities individually, they will participate in collective action during times of economic distress. In a similar vein Barron (2013: 69) argues that during recessions, "firms are more likely to engage in collective political action when they have few financial resources at their disposal". These notions are also present in Aldrich and Fiol's (1994) view that trade associations play a key role in challenging times to defend an industry's reputation. Additionally, previous examinations of trade associations have demonstrated the key and pervasive role these organisations play in times of high economic, social and political

[13] For example, Lorenzoni and Lipparini (1999) argue that interfirm networks and collaboration help companies develop organisational capabilities, by integrating knowledge that resides both within internal and external company boundaries.

distress[14]. Sbrana (2012) undertook an in-depth examination of Confindustria, Italy's main federation of employers, highlighting its functions and benefits to the Italian industrial context between 1969 and 1980, a period characterised by deep national and international transformations such as labour protests, the oil crisis and a broader redefinition of business interest representation.

In relation to the industry level, Aldrich and Fiol (1994) consider that collective activities are common in industries in which products and services are easily imitable, as firms will collaborate to limit the emergence of new competitors and attempt to preserve the status quo. Dean, Vryza, and Fryxell (1998) echo this point of view and underline that collective corporate political activities, specifically PACs in the US manufacturing industry, result in policies that benefit incumbents rather than new entrants. Building on mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), scholars (e.g. Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002; Tucker 2008) argue that firms act collectively merely to shadow other effective organisations and imitate their political actions.

As with the individual engagement in the political arena, the level of industry concentration has also been subject to a debate regarding its relevance to the collective political approach and scholars have presented different results proposing radically opposed views. Grier, Munger, and Roberts (1994) suggested a direct relation between the communal approach and industry concentration. Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer (2002) underlined that organisations in concentrated industries will engage in multiple political activities including collective action, as they are able to propose a cohesive position. Bombardini and Trebbi (2012) measure, within the context of US trade policy, that firms operating in competitive and less concentrated sectors are expected to lobby collectively and join trade associations. In contrast, Ozer and Lee (2009: 15) argue against the idea that the level of participation in collective action solely depends on industry concentration and suggest that "even within concentrated industries, firms may prefer individual action to collective action when they seek firm-specific advantages". This line of thought highlights the importance of acknowledging specific contextual conditions, rather than supporting broad generalisations, which do not take into account industry and firm-

[14] In contrast, Frandsen and Johansen (2017) stress that even though trade associations were not designed to combat crisis, they are in the process of redefining their organisational practices by including crisis management as one of their key activities.

specificities, such as for example the level of government contracts or long-term R&D investments (Ozer and Lee 2009).

Moreover, at industry level, the national associational arrangement will impact firms' choice, as the absence of effective representation given by the deficiency of highly structured, organised and powerful associations will force firms to act individually (Bouwen 2002; Wilson 1990)[15]. Similarly, an industry that is characterised by the presence of strong and organised unions, which have broad networks in the political arena, will favour the development of co-operative political actions between several firms and unions (Masters and Keim 1985).

Extant studies (e.g. Barron 2010) find that national cultural characteristics have an impact on the type of approach, as managers that originate from countries with an individualistic culture will favour individual approaches, whereas managers from collectivistic cultures will tend to act collectively. This does not exclude that managers could also engage in political action that is not aligned with their cultural background. Through an empirical study analysing the impact of national culture on corporate political activity, Barron (2011a: 324) discovered that "managers' preferred level of participation in the policymaking process (individual versus collective action) is influenced by negotiation behaviours, which are determined by culturally-conditioned attitudes towards achieving individual or collective objectives".

The structure of the political and policy-making system is another key institutional level feature, which may have an effect on the type of approach (e.g. Collins and Roper 2005; Hillman 2003). Extant literature indicates three main types: pluralism, corporatism and statism. These differ in relation to the leading public and private actors, their patterns of interaction (Kohler-Koch, Beate, and Eising 1999) and the "coordination of economic activities between stakeholders" (Story and Lawton 2010: 97). Organisations operating in pluralist political systems with extremely fragmented organised interests may have the inclination to act individually given the high level of division of the political power.

[15] The national associations' role is a key point in relation to the participation within European associations and federations. If these are not seen as effective at representing industry interests, firms, when possible, may opt to act individually by joining European associations directly or undertaking independent corporate political activities (Bouwen 2002).

Whilst firms operating in corporatist systems characterised by centralised decision processes may prefer a collective approach that can present a broad consensus (Collins and Roper 2005; Hillman and Keim 1995; Hillman and Hitt 1999). In this latter arrangement, the system of key actors is fairly established and constant over time, which leads to a highly structured organisation of associations that work closely with state actors towards the development and enactment of rules. National cross-industry associations play a key role and "interest organizations assume quasipublic functions and intermediate between state and member demands" (Eising 2004: 218). The statist system is characterised by the dominant role of the state and interest groups are commonly involved in the latter stages of the policy-making process (Eising 2004).

The first type of political organisational structure (i.e. pluralist) can be found in countries such as the UK, US, Italy, Belgium, Ireland and Canada where firms relate with policymakers in a more informal role and can voluntarily join collective organisations (Bennett 1997a; Eising 2009). Trade associations operating in this context are usually smaller organisations with coordinating issues and limited policy capabilities (Spillman 2012). The second arrangement (i.e. corporatist) is common in Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. In these countries "firms have a formal role in government policy […] and are included in associations of employers that consult formally on public policy issues prior to their adoption, and business participation is more often on a collective rather than an individual firm basis" (Keim and Hillman 2008). The latter (i.e. statist), is present in countries such as France, Greece and Japan (e.g. Grant 1993; Quittkat 2002).

From a political science perspective, Grant (1993) differentiates between: company, where direct firm action is common and legitimate; associative, where intermediaries and associations play a key role; and party state, a context that features the presence of a highly factionalised dominant party. Bell (1995) argues that national political and economic structures as well as entrenched public policy frameworks influence the role and functions of trade associations. The scholar highlights how in advanced capitalist states political structures can be divided in two categories: on one hand, a weak state where the business culture is centred upon the firm rather than collective activity, and consequently associations will be weak and largely depend on their members. On the other, a strong state characterised by an active role in economic coordination, which will

seek to direct and strengthen trade associations (Bell 1995: 29). Similarly, Aldrich (2017) highlights that different institutional systems will have different methods, approaches and rules to which organisations representing their interests must abide. For example, the openness of the policymaking environment to lobbying and the extent to which policy-makers are contingent on information offered by interest groups.

An additional institutional level feature is revealed by the level of regulatory and government intervention in a given environment. Interestingly, both ends of the 'interventionist continuum' favour the development of collective action. For example, in an environment characterised by a low level of regulatory intervention, organisations might undertake collective action to anticipate external and intrusive interference by proposing self-regulating mechanisms (King and Lenox 2000). In juxtaposition, the formation of trade associations is particularly high in industries where the threat of government intervention is high and lobbying activity is strong (Barringer and Harrison 2000: 392).

Finally, scholars have proposed that a firm's general relation to political action in terms of its transactional or relational approach has an impact on the decision to work independently or with other firms (Hillman and Hitt 1999). This view contends that firms adopting a proactive relationship-based approach spanning over time will favour collaborative approaches with the intent of continuously broadening networks. In contrast, Collins and Roper (2005: 260) argue that election issues, i.e. those issues that have "high public and political visibility", will have a stronger impact on the adoption of a collective strategy, than the overall relationship with political actors.

As anticipated above, the literature on the different features of collective action is very broad, spans multiple disciplines and employs several theoretical perspectives. Scholars have analysed the benefits and disadvantages of collaborative relationships (Barringer and Harrison 2000), governance forms (Ring and Van De Ven 1992), the role of firm networks and their influence on firm performance (Gulati, Nohria, and Zaheer 2000), and undertaken a meta-review approach to summarise such disparate literature (Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2011). The aim of this section is to acknowledge that collective action in market and nonmarket contexts can take various forms. For example, firms can work in cooperation with other firms through network structures, partnerships, consortia,

alliances, business groups, trade associations and interlocking directorates (e.g. Gulati 1998; Ireland, Hitt, and Vaidyanath 2002; Selsky and Parker 2005). Barnett (2006a) states that there are other means for firms to undertake collective action such as joint ventures, collusion and cartels. However, the latter approaches are tacit and illegal or are intended to favour only specific firms. Moreover, another form of collective action can be undertaken by firms' individual managers, such as for example lobbyists and government affairs managers, who may join coalitions and alliances (e.g. Barron and Hultén 2014; Barron and Trouille 2016).

Even though collective action through partnerships and joint ventures are common whilst undertaking market-oriented activities[16], collaboration is more regulated in the market environment than it is in the nonmarket environment. Bearing in mind national differences, the market environment is generally characterised by a broad range of laws and regulations, for example antitrust laws, which prevent the formation of arrangements of collective action (Boddewyn and Brewer 1994) and alliances, unless formally recognised (Baron 1995). In juxtaposition, informal collaborations are common in the context of firms operating in the social and political arenas. Nevertheless, collective activities are managed by formal organisations, which include "trade associations, formal political coalitions, producer or agricultural cooperatives, research and development consortia, formal industrial alliances, associations of cultural organizations or government agencies, federations of trade unions" (Barnett, Mischke, and Ocasio 2000: 326).

A major issue with collective action, which forms the foundation of the collective action problem, is that of "free riding", whereby firms that do not actively contribute to collective activities are able to benefit from the results of other organisations' efforts in the political arena (Olson 1965). Several firms will be motivated to free ride as collective action requires active participation and the contribution of resources even though returns are unsure and frequently intangible (Barnett 2006a). Nevertheless, Jia (2016) argues that if firms want collective action to be successful, they will not be able to free ride

[16] Aerospace is a particularly relevant example of an industry characterised by high levels of complex partnerships amongst firms, both nationally and internationally. A key example is given by Boeing and Airbus who develop most of their products via joint ventures that span several national boundaries.

completely. There is thus a contraposition between the individual interests of a firm and the collective interests of a group of firms. Minto (2016) argues that there is a misalignment between the understandings of collective action in the corporate political activity literature given that Olson (1965) considered it as activities that produced a collective good, independently from the fact that activities are undertaken by one or more firms. Contrastingly, subsequent work considered collective action as activities advanced by several companies or through an association. In both cases, collective or public goods are by nature non-excludable and non-rival and can be characterised in various ways, such as for example the characteristics of a particular industry (Barnett 2006a) or public policy (Olson 1965; Tullock 1971).

Hence, firms face the diametrically opposed standpoints of cooperation and competition, which can result in conflicting strategies (Bresser 1988). Moran (2006: 454) stresses that "enterprises are simultaneously united by common interests and divided by competitive struggles". The scholar underlines that in the UK, firms have historically not been very successful in the organisation of collective interests due to cultural and institutional features such as institutional evolution and changes in political and social environments (Moran 2006). As Traxler and Huemer (2007: 14) emphasize, "companies face a complex coincidence of divisive and common interests in relation to other companies, something which makes it difficult for them to identify priorities as regards the choice between self-interested and collective action". Hence, firms need to complement their competitive strategies, which focus on distancing them from competitors, with communal strategies that focus on broader environmental outcomes (Barnett 2006a). Although, this inevitably creates tensions, as firms will have to distribute their resources between the two strategies, there are instances whereby a firm's competitive advantage needs to be considered in light of "the outcome of collective struggles for control of the institutional environment" (Barnett 2006a: 1767). Scholars (e.g. Jacomet 2005) propose the notion that trade associations are one of the means through which the collective action issues can be overcome, given the restricted size of the group, and the particular bond reinforced by specific interests. Additionally, associations can provide members with special status, or develop other measures that benefit members' collective action, including codes of conduct and group insurance schemes, which will limit the collective action problem (Bennett 2000: 20).

Another issue involving collective action concerns the ability of trade associations to truly represent the collective voice[17]. While associations should represent the interests of all members, there is an existing debate on how internal dynamics, for example the number and power of large companies within an association, can influence its strategic direction to the detriment of other members. This underlines the contradiction that even though there is the general belief that trade associations operate in the collective interest of its members this is not always the case (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017). Minto (2016) underlines how the degree to which associations favour private interests is still uncertain. Guèguen (2002) states that at the European level, the large companies have a decisive influence on the inner workings of associations. This control is highlighted by several characteristics including: the chairman of the association is frequently a large firm's manager, they have a major firms' club within them and the choice of the General Secretary is influenced by the big companies. Whilst considering that small firms outnumber the large ones, Traxler and Huemer (2007) argue that the skewed power balance derives from the resource endowments, rather than the number of members. This 'large firm dominance' can result in firms within a trade association advancing their own interests rather than interests of the entire industry (Barnett 2013). The big companies will have the opportunity of wearing the association's hat when they have direct interests in doing so or undertaking their own individual actions when more beneficial. Hansen, Mitchell, and Drope (2005) inquire why firms join associations if their ultimate goal is to secure private goods. The scholars underline that a possible explanation could lie in the belief that large firms manipulate the association in the pursuit of individual gains.

Firms that simultaneously join trade associations that have divergent goals, underline the notion that private interests reside within trade associations. Collins and Roper (2005) term this behaviour 'strategic schizophrenia'. Firms will convey their messages through trade associations when they want to elude public opinion. This is particularly relevant for firms that rely on a strong public image and identity. In this way they will be publicly be seen operating in one way, whereas at the same time they will try and pass contrasting or unpopular messages through associations, "this strategic schizophrenia is apparently

[17] Perry (2012) argues that trade associations should represent at least 60% of a given industry to be able to claim that it speaks on behalf the industry.

based on the hope that their social political agenda, which relies on favourable public opinion, will escape scrutiny" (Collins and Roper 2005: 265).

Notwithstanding the limitations, the benefits and incentives for engaging with the political arena through a collective approach are numerous. These include: exhibiting a unified voice, shaping the political environment, increasing the attractiveness of an industry, and calibrating the industry with the requests of its environment (e.g. Barnett 2006a; King, Lenox, and Barnett 2002; North 1990; Ozer and Lee 2009; Traxler and Huemer 2007; Tucker 2008). Jacomet stresses that collective action can provide benefits and advantages to firms that can not be gained otherwise, for instance collective resources such as "democratic legitimacy, private interest government arrangements, unity among members, and trade-offs between different political goals of the collective" (2005: 81). Furthermore, Tucker (2008) highlights that trade associations are able to defend and increase the reputation of an industry as well as develop a context of credibility and confidence for several stakeholders. Dyer and Singh (1998: 676) argue that interorganisational relationships develop market rents through "relation-specific assets, knowledge sharing routines, complementary resource endowments and effective governance", which will lead to a sustained competitive advantage. Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan (2016) have undertaken a meta-analysis that examined the effectiveness, outcomes and impact of corporate political activity and trade association political activity. They argue that individual action has a limited effect on public policy outcomes, and only when companies are able to organise and coordinate action through trade associations will they be able to ensure some influence in the policy-making process. Moreover, from a sociological viewpoint, trade associations "provide an arena for social construction of meaning and to allow members to build a shared perspective on their market activities" (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017: 3).

2.3.2 Defining trade associations as "meta-organisations"

The focus of this thesis is on trade associations, nevertheless in order to comprehensively understand their role in the business-government relations realm, it is necessary to briefly define intermediaries and draw attention to other organisations that operate in this environment, which may undertake intermediary functions. Boléat (2003) highlights other organisations and industry bodies that may retain almost the same characteristics of

associations but actually compete with them. These include industry research bodies, industry forums, employers' organisations, promotional and professional bodies, trade unions, charities, professional and religious associations, public relation agencies, lobbying firms and consultancies, national chambers of commerce, and the media (Boléat 2003). Frandsen and Johansen (2015: 257) define intermediaries as:

> An intermediary is an actor; that is, an individual, a group of individuals, an organization, or a meta-organization, that belongs to a specific area in society (e.g. a specific industry, a specific organizational field, and/or a specific sector), and whose primary function or mission is to mediate; that is, to represent an organization and/or a specific stakeholder group, and/or to intervene in the relationship between them either by furthering or by impeding the interests and activities of the organization in question and/or its stakeholders in a specific situation or over time.

One of their primary roles is to connect firms and political actors, and their activities can be "task oriented", such as direct support, which depends on the type of intermediary, and "long-term", which entails representation (Bengtson, Pahlberg, and Pourmand 2009). The differences between these intermediaries and trade associations are, in terms of the latter, the resources they possess, the particular kind of members as well as their specific knowledge, activities and competences (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005). There are notable differences also in relation to the specific strategies for acquiring members that these collective organisations pursue. These range from generalist strategies, in which collective action is coordinated on a variety of issues by few large firms, to specialised strategies dominated by a limited array of objectives (Barnett, Mischke, and Ocasio 2000).

Within the broad range of intermediaries that form the complex system of business-government relations, trade associations can be considered as one of the earliest arrangements of collective action (May, McHugh, and Taylor 1998), one of the most important entities, as well as the prevailing legal form of firm cooperation in the nonmarket arena (Barnett 2006a; 2013). One of the key differences between trade associations and other forms of collective undertakings is that in the latter firms manage their collective activities directly rather than having independent staff (Battisti and Perry 2015), which can be elected or appointed. Common trade association characteristics include that they are non-profit member-based organizations constituted of for-profit

actors (Spillman 2012), that trade association's members will be represented in the governing structure (Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015) and that employees working in the trade associations are frequently seconded form member companies. The functioning of associations can comprise a voting system based on consensus or a system based on majority votes (Boléat 2003).

These non-profit voluntary associations (Aldrich 2017) are a decidedly prevalent organisation in the economic and political environments[18] as they are present in almost all sectors of the economy (Barnett 2013). Even though individual action dominates the field of political activities (Baumgartner and Leech 2001), it is common understanding that trade associations play a key role in political arenas around the globe and that their activities are major 'contributions' to managing industries (Barnett 2017), fostering economic growth (Doner and Schneider 2000) as well as contributing to public policy processes (Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015). Trade associations help companies decrease uncertainty and strengthen the collective interests by identifying common problems and connecting firms that are associated by shared interests (Ireland, Hitt, and Vaidyanath 2002). Contrastingly, Walker and Rea (2014) argue against these views, proposing that cooperative political strategies through trade associations have diminished due to the development of in-house government affairs departments and a fragmentation of business interests. According to the authors, there has been a decrease in the importance of associations backed by the shift from stakeholder to shareholder prominence. In accordance, Mizruchi (2013) underlines that firms prefer independent activities on specific issues rather than operating through associations.

Nevertheless, there are several examples, which highlight the importance of these organisations. In the United States, associations such as PhRMA and the NRA[19] have contributed towards informing and shaping public policy (Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015) and curbing the implementation of legislation (Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016). In the EU, the increase in the number of trade federations (Greenwood 1997; Knill 2001)

[18] Aldrich (2017) refers to the US context, and it can be applied to the UK context as well. However, in some countries like Austria and Germany and to some extent France, firms are compelled to join local chambers of commerce or sector specific associations.

[19] Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) represents the pharmaceutical industry in the US, and the National Rifle Association (NRA) represents the advocates for gun rights.

has been essential towards the development of strong business entities that could effectively relate with supranational institutions. In the UK, collective organisation through trade associations was initially encouraged by state actors because these needed to limit business fragmentation and sought a strong counterpart with which they could effectively relate in the business environment (Moran 2006). Moreover, even though business was well represented in government in various interwar administrations, a strong opinion for a collective voice emerged after WWI (Davenport-Hines 1984).

Similarly to companies (Taminiau and Wilts 2006) trade associations provide specialist information of their industries on which decision-makers rely in order to draft policy. In this perspective, associations are not only a key element of the institutional framework that can contribute towards economic expansion and progress, but it underlines the bi-directionality of the relationship and the dependence that policymakers have on these entities. Bennett (1997a) argues that trade associations are not to be considered in the sole perspective of business influencing political institutions, but also means through which government can relate with and influence the business environment, for example by using associations as proxies for disseminating information and self-regulatory mechanisms of portions of the economy.

Trade association is the most common name for these entities, however, within extant academic literature they are referred to in different ways, including: "business associations (e.g. Bailey and Rupp 2006; Spillman 2012), "interest associations" (e.g. Galvin 2002), and "industry associations" (e.g. King and Lenox 2000).

Aldrich and Staber (1988: 111) define trade associations as "organizations created to represent business interests within specific domains, mobilizing firms within their domain so that collective action can be taken on common problems". Even though there are cases in which members of associations are individuals[20] the membership is usually composed of companies[21]. In line with this latter perspective, Ahrne and Brunsson (2008) consider trade associations as 'meta-organisations' whereby the members of the organisation are other organisations rather than individuals. Similarly, even though Gulati, Puranam, and

[20] In the UK, the Institute of Directors (IoD) is an example of an association in which members are individuals. In the US, an example is the Business Roundtable.
[21] Bennett and Ramsden (2007) argue that in the UK environment, professional associations are usually larger, whereas trade associations are smaller in membership size.

Pushman (2012) broaden the definition to include individuals, the scholars focus on this specific organisational entity and emphasize the independent role of the meta-organisation itself as opposed to the perspectives grounded towards the firm and its collective undertakings[22]. Barringer and Harrison (2000: 383) describe trade associations as "organisations (typically non-profit) that are formed by firms in the same industry to collect and disseminate trade information, offer legal and technical advice, furnish industry-related training, and provide a platform for collective lobbying". In contrast, Wilts and Quittkat (2004: 385) do not separate between employers' organisations and trade associations and define them as "organisation(s) that relate private business interests to the public decision-making process". However, it is necessary to distinguish between trade associations and employers or professional associations, whereby the first operate in the economic field and activities range from production, trade and economic policy. Contrastingly, the latter operate in the social field and undertake social activities such as those related to wages and employment matters, or the standards and ethics of a particular profession (Bradley 1992).

There are trade associations that represent an industry nationally, such as The Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders (SMMT) in the UK automotive industry, subsectors of an industry such as the Regional Airline Association in the US (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017), or may span different but interconnected sectors, as is the case of ADS Group that represents the aerospace, defence, security and space sectors in the UK. Additionally, there are horizontal associations, in which members are aggregated on the basis of their functions and practices; geographical associations, which comprise members that operate in the same geographical location; and federations, where members are other associations (Boléat 2003). Finally, a key typology relates to "peak-organisations" which represent all kinds of business actors and are not linked to a particular industry (Barley 2010), such as National Chambers of Commerce, the Business Roundtable in the US and the Confederation of Business Industries (CBI) in the UK. Additional models can be that of international and supranational associations that are

[22] The difference between including individuals or organisations as members of meta-organisations is the main feature that differentiates two main schools of thought. The first, EU based follows Ahrne and Brunsson's (2008) view and includes organisations, whilst the other view is US and UK based and builds on Gulati, Puranam, and Pushman (2012).

formed to deal with particular institutional and regulatory environments. An immediate illustration can be taken from those associations at the European level that are formed with the specific intent to relate with European Union institutions. The AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) comprises 24 national associations and is the key European association for the aerospace and defence sectors (ASD 2017a). A peculiarity of this organisation is that individual companies are also members (ASD 2017b). This feature clearly highlights that the above-mentioned models are not 'fixed', rather they can be fluid and overlapping. Analogously, various studies (e.g. Bennett 1999; 2000) contend that these typologies are over simplistic and do not capture how the membership composition can alter associations' activities and decision-making processes. At the European level there are mainly sectorial or "special interest" associations, rather than associations that encompass companies from different industries and represent broad interests, such as horizontal business associations (Teufelsbauer 2003: 33). Notwithstanding the growth of European associations, national associations have had to increase their representation above the national level (Eising 2004).

This study adopts the definition of Ahrne and Brunsson (2005; 2008) and thus focuses on trade associations that can be characterised as meta-organisations. There are various features that define this type of organisation: first, as previously mentioned, members must be other organisations and not individuals. This entails a series of consequences such as for example firms having greater resources – as opposed to individuals - that may be employed and shared with the meta-organisation. Whilst this is necessary for the survival of the association, diverse resource-availability could lead to imbalances between members that could influence the workings and decision-making processes (Berkowitz and Bor 2017). Another consequence is that organisations within the meta-organisation could compete with the meta-organisation itself (Ahrne and Brunsson 2008). Second, meta-organisations are partial formal organisations as they may or may not possess the five constituents of a complete organisation: membership, hierarchy, rules, monitoring and sanction (Ahrne and Brunsson 2010). Specifically, whilst trade associations may exhibit several of these characteristics, they may lack other such as for example the ability to sanction their members. Nevertheless, this conceptual acknowledgment is particularly relevant as it allows scholars (and this study) to consider trade associations as formal organisations as opposed to other forms of collective action

such as networks or interorganisational relationships (Berkowitz and Dumez 2016). Third, meta-organisations must be associations, as members will be free to join or leave, and the authority of the meta-organisation will lie within the collective.

However, within the classification of meta-organisations there is a wide variety of trade associations that can be structured very differently and exhibit considerable differences amongst them, even though in many instances these dissimilarities can not be readily distinguished (Boléat 2003). Generally, members fund trade associations through the payment of fees and often these are small entities with a limited number of employees (Aldrich and Fiol 1994), whereas in other instances they are large organisations with extensive resources (Barnett 2013). There are enduring pressures regarding the size of these organisations as on one hand, a larger membership will yield grater financial and human resources and legitimise political demands (Schlozman and Tierney 1986), whilst on the other hand, large associations will encounter greater coordinating difficulties (Staber and Aldrich 1983). Subsequently, given these coordinating deficiencies, associations representing wide-ranging interests may be substituted by, or modify their structure into, associations that represent more specific interests (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017).

Aldrich and Staber (1988) claim that trade associations usually require limited resources to function and this feature – which pertains to their minimalist nature - allows them to be robust organisations. This is echoed by Barnett (2013: 216), who underlines that trade associations require little overhead to initiate and, if necessary, can survive for extended periods of time with relatively little financial support. Contrastingly, Dür and Mateo (2012) find that the amount and type of resources that associations possess clearly affect the level of access that these may secure with political institutions. Resource rich associations have greater possibilities to access decision-making processes especially in terms of the European Commission. Nevertheless, even if associations possess limited resources, the limited costs may allow them to persist over a long period of time and lead the trade associations to become a "ghost" association (Berkowitz and Bor 2017), whereby the organisation does not cease to exist even if it has ceased to fulfil its initial role.

Prior research suggests that there are numerous motivations for firms to join trade associations and the key reasons include: having their interests represented in socio-political and economic arenas, influencing political decision making, networking, acquiring information and expertise and taking part in collective bargaining (e.g. Bennett and Ramsden 2007; Bennett and Robson 2001; Lawton, Doh, and Rajwani 2014; Wilts and Meyer 2005), as well as firms' status in the market and loyalty to the industry (Battisti and Perry 2015). Hence, the key reasons are to reduce uncertainty, gain individual and collective benefits and influence the external environment. Barnett (2017:4) has characterised the wide-ranging factors in economic self-interest, sociological identity and meta-organisational management. In relation to individual benefits, these activities and resources may support companies develop firm-level capabilities (Kahl 2014). At the European level, Guèguen (2002) argues that companies become members of trade associations because on one hand the association is the official representative towards EU institutions, on the other hand because the organisation is an essential meeting place for national companies.

Schmitter and Streeck (1981) propose the concepts of 'logic of membership' and 'logic of influence', which have an impact on associations' attractiveness and structure. The logic of membership is concerned with the members' characteristics and relates to the responsibility towards representing their members' interests and the motives that drive firms to join (Bennett 1999). For example, a key factor that could have an impact on this logic is the composition of the association, i.e. the presence of a small number of big companies that dominate or a large number of smaller companies. The logic of membership is a bundle of services that can be further divided in the logic of services and the logic of collective action (Bennett and Ramsden 2007). The first relates to the association taking into account firms' specific interests and providing firm specific services, and the second relates to the association's role in representing members' interests, or at least the majority of its members (Bennett 1998a; 2000).

The logic of influence, relates to dealing with the concerns of the interlocutors, ensuring continuous relations with the institutional field and other stakeholders. Usually, the focus is mostly directed towards the government (Grant 2002). These, two concepts have varying weight depending on the institutional environment. If the environment is characterised by "weak, dispersed, dependent and easily permeated institutions"

(Schmitter and Streeck 1981: 86), associations will give priority to the logic of membership, however, if the environment is complex this will create a "high political entry price" and associations will need to give priority to the logic of influence.

2.3.3 Trade association activities

In addition to the abovementioned typologies, scholars have further categorised associations according to their functions. Galambos (1988) differentiates between dinner club, service and policy-capable associations. The first type does not offer a comprehensive array of services but rather provides a 'space' in which members can assemble. Whereas the difference between the second and third typology refers to activities directed internally at members, and activities directed at influencing policy, which include practices such as "systematic policy monitoring, intermittently active lobbying, coalition formation and regular discussion with government on technical that are below the national-political radar screen" (Spillman 2012: 279).

Similarly, building on Boléat (2003), Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips (2015) contend that trade associations can be categorised as powerhouses, fast followers, campaigners and orators based on their size and functions. In terms of their functions, the main distinction relates to their internal engagement (i.e. with their membership) and external engagement (i.e. with socio-political actors and the policy-making process). Dür and Mateo (2016) distinguish between "insiders", which are represented by trade associations that provide information directly to policy-makers and "outsiders", which are associations that mobilize the public to pressure policy-makers. To summarize, the main distinction, which is significant to this research refers to the fact that some trade associations are strongly focused at interacting and influencing the external environment, others instead concentrate internally at providing services to their members (Barnett 2017). This distinction can also be distinguished in terms of the typologies of goods trade associations can provide their members, namely selective goods, which are services to individual members and collective goods, which are directed at shaping the policy-making process (Schmitter and Streeck 1981). Finally, even though scholars suggest that activities directed towards the political arena are the main driver (e.g. Bailey and Rupp 2006; May, McHugh, and Taylor 1998; Minto 2016; Wilts and Meyer 2005), there have been different perspectives concerning the primary functions and activities trade associations undertake.

For example, Spillman (2012) argues that smaller trade bodies do not undertake lobbying activities.

In relation to internal oriented activities, these include supporting member firms thrive in the market environment through business development activities (Perry 2009) such as sharing information, providing export and home market trade promotion, providing technical, legal and environmental advice and counselling (e.g. Culpepper 2002; May, McHugh, and Taylor 1998). In addition, educating members' employees through seminars and professional development, conducting research such as surveys, trend analysis and making forecasts (Spillman 2012), as well as developing "product/process standards through trade committees, trade journals, marketing campaigns" (Aldrich and Fiol 1994: 658). A crucial function that is frequently undertaken by trade associations is that of industry self-regulation, where they can develop and implement regulatory mechanisms (e.g. Bailey and Rupp 2006; Barnett and King 2008; King and Lenox 2000). Berkowitz and Bor (2016) underline that producing information rather than actual products is a key characteristic of meta-organisations. Other market-oriented activities include exchange of price and statistics, industry cost analyses, collective bargaining, prevention of fraud and unfair methods of competition and commercial arbitration (Tedlow 1988). In their study on the factors affecting market entry modes of transnational corporations (TNCs), De Villa, Rajwani, and Lawton (2015) argue that interest groups and trade associations play a key role at the industry level in affecting firm operations as well as being sources of support. The authors highlight that trade associations are important for firms entering new markets as they can provide information, access to policy networks as well as increase their reputation and legitimacy towards host governments. Generating, managing and sharing information are key activities that associations undertake vis-à-vis their members and other stakeholders (Bennett 1997b; Beyers 2004; Taminiau and Wilts 2006). Another key function is their ability to develop inter-firm networks and relationships by facilitating connections between them (Battisti and Perry 2015; Maennig and Ölschläger 2011).

In relation to the nonmarket environment, activities include policy monitoring, developing relations with decision makers, influencing the policy-making process through policy briefs, statements and position papers, developing platforms that connect companies and policymakers such as trade shows, seminars and conferences (e.g. Barnett

2013; Fagan-Watson, Elliot, and Watson 2015; Oliver 1990). Moreover, there are certain activities that do not strictly fall into any of the two dimensions, but rather cover both market and nonmarket environments. For example, advertising campaigns, the provision of forums where firms can discuss and share information with other firms, trade association and institutional representatives, as well as provide "advice services […] that provide reassurance, increase confidence or reduce uncertainty" for firm representatives (Bennett and Ramsden 2007). Moreover, trade associations are able to reduce information asymmetry by merging information from several firms (Wilts and Quittkat 2004). This is of particular relevance to decision-makers that rely on information when developing policy and regulations (Hultén, Barron, and Bryson 2012).

One of the fundamental purposes of trade associations consists in connecting a specific group of actors with "interlocutors or adversaries" (Van Waarden 1992). These include but are not limited to, governments, regulatory agencies, NGOs and other institutional players. Depending on the trade association, the nature of the group of actors can consist in industry specific firms or firms belonging to different industries. Their bridging and intermediary feature connecting parties (Reveley and Ville 2010) is decisively a key characteristic that underlines their nature. Grant (2002) stresses that this is a unique feature, and entails considering the necessities, priorities and most importantly the collective interests of their members, whilst attempting to develop a positive outcome for all. This is a particularly relevant point, as this intermediary function makes these organisations dependent on both parties. On one side, they are dependent on their members for participation as well as for information, economic and labour resources. On the other side, they are dependent on the institutional actors in terms of access and recognition (e.g. Van Waarden 1992).

Tucker (2008) analyses how trade associations are able to act as industry reputation agents. Reputation can be considered as a key feature within business-government relations; it is an intangible asset that benefits firms gather resources and improve competitive advantage (Barney 1991; Hall 1992). This is echoed by Coen (2007), who stresses that a firm's reputation is influenced by its participation in trade associations. In return this 'reputational capital' will contribute towards 'identity building' and affect the development of firms' direct access to decision makers (Coen 1998). Thus, in this view, joining associations is considered as a means to improving a firm's access, direct channels

and as "positive externalities of reputation building" rather than working towards the development of collective goods (Coen 2007: 339). Coen (2007) explores these notions in the context of the European Union and its institutions. During their development, there was an increasing number of firms that were looking to influence policy on specific matters. Preference or preferential access was given to those firms that were able to collaborate with competitors and develop broad based political agendas that would contribute towards generating collective goods that could create greater advantages to a bigger number of players. Even though Coen's (2007) work refers to the supranational environment, strong similarities can be underlined with national political environments, as also national decision makers will prefer to relate with an industry body that is perceived to have a more objective perspective than individual firms and that can bring together several actors, presenting a unified voice (Traxler and Huemer 2007).

Guèguen (2002) categorises trade association political strategies in negative, reactive and proactive. The first, consists in open opposition to proposals or recommending unsustainable positions. The second is characterised by trade associations not opposing the European Commission's demands and relying a nonconflictual relationship. The third consists of actively collaborating with institutions. Moreover, trade associations are able to leverage resources external to the organisation by exploiting their member's individual networks in the political arena as well as their specialist knowledge (Fagan-Watson, Elliot, and Watson 2015). Although several actions have been highlighted there is still the need to understand the in-depth dynamics, relations and platforms in which these take place (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017).

2.3.4 Moderators of trade association activity

Similarly to the features that affect individual firms' political activity approach and development, there are several internal and external factors that may impact trade associations' activities and effectiveness. The main factors include: the size or corporate governance mechanisms of members, the level of consolidation amongst members and a high level of commonality between their interests, high transaction costs, a shared external threat, a high level of government intervention, as well as the associative abilities of the organisation (e.g. Greenwood and Westgeest 2003; Reveley and Ville 2010; Schaefer and Kerrigan 2008). In addition, Drope and Hansen (2009) argue that highly

concentrated industries will affect the political activities of trade associations, as will the levels of government interaction, such as the amount of government contracts. Hultén, Barron, and Bryson (2012: 359) argue against the importance of industry concentration and suggest that "historically entrenched norms and expectations play a greater role".

Tedlow (1988) stresses that trade associations are more effective when they find themselves in a situation whereby the whole industry faces a common problem and the different actors i.e. firms, consumers, unions, distributors and shareholders are able to unite and the trade association is able to present a unified front. In terms of political activities, Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan (2016) build on Olson (1965) and contend that for trade associations to be effective, their members should coordinate and be aligned in terms of the agenda and objectives of the organisation. This approach will enable the collective group to settle potential issues and lead over groups that have not been able to present a united front.

Concerning the institutional context Grant (2002: 55) stresses that: firstly, the structure of the government will influence associations' activities. Differences in the decision-making distribution between legislative and executive authorities will affect a different deployment of associations' resources. Wilson (2003) argues that in the UK, given the power of the executive, firms, trade associations and other organisations that intend to represent business interests will have stronger links with government departments[23]. Secondly, the level of the authority's decentralisation, for example a federal state with a decentralised policymaking such as the US or many aspects related to the devolution processes of Scottish and Welsh local governments in the UK. Furthermore, the government's attitude to the associations' development has a strong influence on their effectiveness. Even in environments where associations are not part of the public decision-making process, a government's acknowledgment and support of trade association activity can positively alter their functions and role (Bennett 2000). Schaefer and Kerrigan contend that trade associations' nonmarket activities – the authors refer specifically to CSR related actions - are dependent on a number of factors including "the

[23] The executive comprises the key actors and institutions that are involved in policy development as well as co-ordinating government activity (Smith 1999: 1). It includes the Prime Minister, cabinet, cabinet committees and government departments (Dorey 2014).

nature of the industry, its history and structure and the level of external pressure it faces" (2008: 193).

In contrast to the common views previously highlighted on corporatist, pluralist and statist theories, it is critical to stress that very often it is not possible to understand the role of trade associations or explain their political strategies and actions by simply referring to "standard theories and conventional assumptions" regarding national political structure (Spillman 2012: 296). In fact, these classifications are not able to capture the intricacies and dynamics of such complex organisations, as Laumann and Knoke (1987: 381) state "the boundaries between public and private sectors are blurred, and irrelevant, even in noncorporatist societies". Bell (1995: 27) stresses that in addition to broad macro-political structures, scholars should pay attention to organisational attributes including trade association's ability to aggregate members' interests, focus on long-term matters, retain relative autonomy from its membership as well as be effectively resourced. It is hence vital to remain alert towards contextual features as well as specific endogenous and exogenous factors that might alter a group's collective action or an association's role in relation to its members, community and social, political and regulatory institutions.

Spillman (2012) in her examination of the US environment argues that activity in specific policy domains is central in defining a trade association. Even though associations operating in pluralist environments do not have the structure and political muscle that key associations retain in corporatist environments, they can play a crucial role in shaping specific political domains. Associations collaborate and compete with other interest groups in these domains, and their activities will change in intensity, depending on the importance or costs and benefits of a specific domain. Hence, the intensity of political actions can vary considerably, from 'light' activities such as monitoring the political environment, examining changes in rules and regulations, and reporting findings on blogs and newsletters, to active policy participation and activities specifically engaged towards altering the political agenda. These considerations are extremely important in understanding that not all "business associations are politically active interest groups" (Spillman 2012: 270).

2.4 Summary, gaps and research questions

This chapter has provided a review of two intertwined strands of literature: the first on corporate political activity, and the second on trade associations. Specifically, the first section defined the concepts of nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity, highlighting how organisations operate in the socio-political and regulatory environment through the development and undertaking of political activities. Moreover, given the interdisciplinary nature of the field and the absence of a general theory, the key theoretical lenses used to analyse corporate political activities have been highlighted. The second section focused on a specific form of political activity, namely collective action. As evidenced, one of the main approaches to collaborative efforts in the political arena is undertaken through trade associations, which are crucial organisations operating in, and shaping the business-government interaction. Hence, the section defined trade associations and underlined the main activities undertaken by these organisations.

2.4.1 Identification of the gaps in knowledge

The review has allowed the researcher to identify research gaps that will be highlighted in the following paragraphs and addressed within this thesis. The first gap pertains to the area of collective action, intermediaries and trade associations. Several scholars within the fields of business-government relations, nonmarket strategy, international business, management, and political science (e.g. Barnett 2013; Hultén, Barron, and Bryson 2012; Jacomet 2005; Spillman 2012; Tucker 2008), have looked at firms' approaches towards the political arena, and have investigated the reasons behind undertaking individual and/or collective approaches. Nevertheless, there is still the need to understand the different facets that drive firms to act collectively, recognise the role of key intermediaries (Bengtson, Pahlberg, and Pourmand 2009), and specifically comprehend the role of trade associations (e.g. Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016; Marques 2017; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Wilts and Meyer 2005). Further evidence that there is still scope to investigate collective action, is given by Baron's recent work in which he argues:

> A central nonmarket strategy question is when a firm should delegate nonmarket action to a general business association such as the Chamber of Commerce or the National Association of Manufacturers, when it should rely on an industry association, when it should form an ad hoc coalition, and when it should act individually (2016: 37-38).

Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani (2013: 99) state that "the corporate political activity perspective needs to be further explored, from within individual government affairs functions, collectively from within trade associations or using third-party lobbying organizations". The authors mention that a key aspect is to understand how firm-government relations complement or differ from business or trade associations' relations.

Moreover, recent work (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017; Spillman 2017; Berkowitz and Bor 2017) has advanced calls to specifically focus on trade associations that can be categorised as meta-organisations, which are associations of organisations (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005), as opposed to associations that comprise individual members as well. Berkowitz and Dumez (2016) highlight various avenues including the dynamics, efficiency and usefulness of meta-organisations, as well as their interactions with their members and the environment. Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto (2017) propose three levels of analysis to contribute to the understanding of trade associations. The first entails investigating the firm level and thus looking at members' dynamics, the second focuses on the collective area comprised of members and the trade association, and the third, on the trade association level as an organisation in its own right. This thesis is clearly positioned in the latter dimension.

In terms of meta-organisation management, Barnett (2017) underlines the need to understand how these organisations define their agenda and decide their strategic direction. In contrast to the previous research avenues, Aldrich (2017) underlines the need to acknowledge external features that may help to understand this typology of organisation in greater detail. The first entails understanding the relations between the different interest associations operating within a particular context. The second involves an appreciation of the distinctive features of political systems and how such different institutional settings may affect their relations between associations and political institutions. Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips (2015) highlight three main areas that need to be developed, which relate to institutional theory, namely how associations act as institutional entrepreneurs, within their organisational arena; to collective identity, in terms of how associations can develop shared identities; and nonmarket strategy, in relation to how trade associations participate in political action to shape the political environment. The latter will be the focus of this thesis. It is important to acknowledge that trade associations' political action might differ consistently from light activities to

active participation (Spillman 2012) and this research will attempt to explore the determinants of these differences.

A further gap relates to the various levels than can be analysed in the investigation of business-government relations and corporate political activity. Most research, which is still fragmented and has yet to reach widely accepted theoretical and empirical conclusions, concentrates on the national level, although there are other levels i.e. local, regional and supranational, which develop policy and regulations. Thus, local and regional levels present a valuable opportunity for scholars to explore the field of political activities. Rajwani and Liedong (2015) highlight that most work investigating the United States context focus on the broader national level, disregarding the local level, where in many circumstances single states are also able to implement policy. Furthermore, most studies on trade associations have investigated the national level (e.g. Bell 1995; Reveley and Ville 2010; Wilts and Quittkat 2004), and the supranational level (e.g. Beyers 2004; Greenwood 2002). Hence, except a limited number of studies that have looked at the local level (e.g. Coleman and Grant 1985; Dixon 2006; Valler and Wood 2004), there is definitely a lack of research on trade associations on regional levels.

A final gap refers to a methodological issue as there are several calls to adopt a qualitative approach in the analysis of this particular field (e.g. Dahan, Hadani, and Schuler 2013; Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011; Marquis and Raynard 2015; Rehbein and Schuler 1999), in particular through personal interviews (Boddewyn 2007) as abundant research has adopted a quantitative approach. Qualitative methods would provide an in-depth perspective at how organisations develop their interactions with policy makers and institutional entities and respond to political uncertainty (Marquis and Raynard 2015: 321). In the context of analysing political resources, Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman (2006: 326) argue that "political behaviours are often covert in nature" and that qualitative methods are more appropriate. Scholars such as Van Schendelen (2002) have also encouraged research using case studies and sector studies. This methodological approach is in line with a recent call for papers of the Global Strategy Journal[24] where qualitative

[24] This call was published in 2015 for a special issue of the *Global Strategy Journal* titled "Political connections in global competition" and the research questions included "Who are the key actors in the business and government spheres that build political connections?" and "How

studies exploring the "How" and "Why" questions of the interaction between businesses and political actors are explicitly requested. Table 2 provides a summary of the main gaps and how these will be addresses in this thesis.

Table 2: Identified research gaps and contributions of the thesis

Research gaps	Addressed in the research
Acknowledge what drives firms to act independently and/or collectively in a specific context (Baron 2016).	The thesis builds on and extends existing views on why firms choose to join trade associations.
Comprehend the specific role of trade associations (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Wilts and Meyer 2005).	This study explores their role by exploring how trade associations' managers and other business actors perceive their role as well as the features that may impact it.
Understand how trade associations set their agenda (Barnett 2017)	A key aspect that is analysed is how trade associations define their political strategy, by investigating the determinants that influence its development.
More research is needed in trade association political activity (Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016)	Trade associations' political activities are considered both in how these are defined and formulated as well as on how they are deployed to shape the political environment.
Extant work has neglected trade associations as meta-organisations (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017; Spillman 2017; Berkowitz and Bor 2017).	Trade associations included in this study are specifically meta-organisations.
There is the need to conduct the analysis at several levels (Rajwani and Liedong 2015).	This study explores trade associations and their political activities on two different levels: national and regional.
Need for qualitative research (Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011; Dahan, Hadani, and Schuler 2013; Marquis and Raynard 2015), in particular through personal interviews (Boddewyn 2007).	Overarching gap that is reflected in the proposed research questions and the methodological approach chosen to answer them.
Future scholarship should seek to integrate existing theories to improve our understanding of CPA (Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2012; Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011; Mellahi et al. 2016).	The research is particularly sensitive to the specific context and attempts to find convergences between different concepts.

Source: Author's compilation.

do MNEs engage with political actors when they face multiple layers of government at regional, national, provincial and local levels?".

The above-mentioned gaps have informed the elaboration of this thesis, from the development of the overarching objective and research questions, to the definition and development of an appropriate and consistent research design.

2.4.2 Research questions

In the following section three research questions are presented which stimulated the development of a research design involving qualitative methods. The broad objective of this research is to explore the political role of a specific form of meta-organisation in a highly politicised context such as the UK aerospace industry. Moreover, the research focuses on developing knowledge of how national and regional sectorial trade associations develop political activities and attempt to influence and shape their political environment.

Broad research questions were set at the initial stage of the research, which were subsequently refined and adapted as new information and knowledge was gained either through the collection of primary data, insightful discussions with academics and professionals who have a strong understanding of the researched topic, as well as through the continuous revision of extant literature. This iterative process is distinctive of qualitative research (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008; Verschuren 2003) and is in line with Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey's (2011: 32) proposition that "research questions are not static; they change, are adapted and refined while working through the different tasks in the design cycle".

Even though the research questions were not entirely defined during the initial stages of the research, they allowed the researcher to consider the qualitative method as the most appropriate. This approach is in line with Corbin and Strauss (2008: 27) who argue that "the interesting aspect of qualitative research is that though a researcher begins a study with a general question, questions arise during the course of the research that are more specific and direct further data collection and analysis". Moreover, the proposed research design, which will be outlined in Chapter 4, is coherent with Bouchard's (1976: 402) suggestion to formulate appropriate questions and subsequently choose the most appropriate method, instead of preselecting a method that would direct the research. In line with this view, other scholars (e.g. Corbin and Strauss 2014; Ghauri and Grønhaug 2005) agree that research questions should pilot the methodological choices.

In line with these notions and building on the discussion within this chapter the following research questions emerged:

- **RQ1: What are the determinants of trade associations' political role?**
- **RQ2: How is political strategy defined and exercised in trade associations?**
- **RQ3: How do trade associations exert their influence?**

With these research questions in mind, the following chapter explores the characteristics of the UK aerospace industry, offering a background context for this study and explaining the choice to explore this specific industry and the national and regional levels of analysis.

Chapter 3 Research setting - An overview of the UK aerospace economic and political environment

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter offers a concise description of the UK's aerospace industry as well as the political institutional environment. Moreover, the chapter will present the current framework of trade associations in the UK, and specifically focus on those operating in the aerospace context. The aim of this chapter is to provide a background context and to underline the features that justify the positioning of the study within this specific, and in many instances, unique empirical context. The following sections demonstrate that the UK's aerospace industry is an appropriate setting to explore the business-government interaction, and in particular the role and functions of trade associations.

Section 3.2 outlines the UK aerospace industry and broadly describes its characteristics and structure whilst underlining the factors that have positioned it amongst the top European and world industries. Moreover, the section underlines how and why industry players are politically active. Section 3.3 offers an overview of the political environment both at regional and national level, representing the different contexts in which the trade associations included in this study operate. Section 3.4 briefly describes the structure and development of trade associations in the UK, and then focuses specifically on illustrating the contemporary setting of trade associations in the aerospace sector. Finally, section 3.5 concludes the chapter and summarises the key justifications as to why the UK's aerospace industry is an appropriate research context.

3.2 Defining the UK aerospace industry

The aerospace industry can be defined as "the industry that comprises all those firms involved in the research, design, development, manufacture, repair, maintenance and disposal of aerospace products" (Hartley 2014: 2). The UK aerospace industry is currently the biggest in Europe and second globally. In 2016 it generated over £31 billion of turnover, of which 90% was exported. The industry employs over 120.000 people directly and further supports over 118,000 people indirectly (Gale 2017). Moreover the sector has particularly encouraging future prospects as the demand for air transport is set to increase and the UK industry currently enjoys a backlog of over 13,000 aircraft worth almost £200 billion (AGP 2016).

In addition to these figures, there are other characteristics that highlight the significant contribution that aerospace makes to the UK's economic development and exercise an effect on its political importance. Hartley places aerospace within the restricted 'club' of economically strategic industries[25] defined as "high technology and R&D intensive industries with technical spill-overs to the rest of the economy; […] decreasing cost industries reflecting scale and learning economies; and […] imperfectly competitive based on national monopolies and oligopolies" (2014: 5). Additionally, the scholar underlines that the industry should be considered as a strategic military industry given its contribution to national defence and national security. According to a recent House of Commons library report, the industry employs high technology techniques and is 'research intensive', which denotes that it draws a highly qualified workforce (Rhodes 2014). Moreover, the rest of the economy also benefits from technology spin-offs stemming from products such as radar, composite materials and jet engines (Hartley 2010: 164). A significant example regarding the importance of this particular industry to government, and the consequent strong relations between government and the industry, has been the creation of the Aerospace Growth Partnership (AGP) in 2010 with over £2 billion worth of funding (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2013). Subsequently, the government created the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) in 2014 to assist the implementation of its technology strategy (AGP 2016).

Aerospace is not a single market in its own right but includes various sub-markets. The key distinction that is relevant in terms of this study refers to the differentiation between civil and military markets as these feature different interactions with political actors. Firms operating in the defence industry[26] have a particularly special relationship with political institutions, as defence sector customers are mostly governments (House of Commons 2011), whereas in the civil sector customers are predominantly private companies. This interaction mainly developed thanks to the importance of air power,

[25] Economically strategic industries are leading industries (e.g. telecommunications and biotechnology), which are crucial to national economic development. Hartley (2014) advances several features that define economically strategic industries. For instance, they are constituted of a limited number of large companies that control the national market and enjoy very large profits, as well as present high levels of technological development, which can translate in spill-overs to other industries and sectors.

[26] The aerospace sector is only one of the constituents of the defence and military sector as other sub-markets include land and marine products.

established during WWI, which profoundly changed the relationship of the state with aerospace (Hartley 2010). The last decades of the 20th century have been driven by the military sector, as there was a clear gap between defence sales and civil sales, with a superiority of the first, whereas recent years have seen a growth of the civil sector and the convergence of the two submarkets (Figure 2). Nevertheless, the majority of firms operating within the aerospace industry supply products and services to both markets, and more importantly this differentiation is almost irrelevant in this study as trade associations generally represent the broader aerospace industry[27].

Figure 2: UK aerospace industry sales by activity 1980 - 2010

Source: ADS (2011)

The aerospace industry is characterised by a pyramid structure and Keith Hayward's description is still remarkably contemporary:

> "At the top there are a few fully capable prime contractors, or system integrators – usually, though not exclusively, airframe manufacturers; an equally small group of engine makers; a larger group of discrete systems and equipment firms; and a huge 'comet's tail of medium and small suppliers and subcontractors" (1994: 6).

[27] A notable exception was the NDI (Northern Defence Industries), a trade association representing small and medium size enterprises in the defence supply chain, until it was acquired by the EEF (Defence Contracts Online 2017).

This description is valid for the global aerospace industry as well as for the UK industry, and this feature is exacerbated if the sole civil sector of airliners is considered as it is characterised by global duopolies in each aircraft category: large jet airliners by Airbus and Boeing; regional jet liners by Bombardier and Embraer; and turboprop by ATR and Bombardier (Hartley 2014).

In the UK, the development of this particular industry structure is given by several reasons. A key feature relates to the post-Second World War recovery of the aircraft industry, which entailed rationalisation and the need to establish economies of scale[28]. This led to several mergers and acquisitions as well as industry exits that shifted the industry from featuring a large number of small firms focused on small-scale production, to having a limited number of multinational groups that dominated the entire industry (Hartley 2014). Hence, the industry is dominated by an extremely limited number of large companies that play a key role in both the market and nonmarket contexts. In terms of the latter, these companies are capable of relating directly with country level political institutional representatives and have a greater input in trade associations' decision-making processes.

In contrast to other industries, such as for example the financial services sector that is mostly concentrated in one area (i.e. London), the companies operating in the aerospace industry are distributed around the country (UK Government 2013); there is thus a high regional distribution of aerospace companies across Great Britain (Figure 3). The establishment of large firms in various regions and home nations has attracted numerous firms, including suppliers and contractors, which in turn has resulted in the development of aerospace clusters. These concentrations can be found in the Northwest near Preston, the Southeast, the Southwest near Bristol and Yeovil, the Midlands, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The South-West can be considered as one of the larger hubs (Matthews 2017), and several of these clusters have developed 'centres of excellence' in specific fields of manufacturing (Hartley 2014). Consequently, these areas have seen the establishment of trade associations and it is not a surprise that key organisations are located within these regional clusters. The presence of companies disseminated across

[28] A similar process occurred in other industries around the globe, such as the US where - following decades of mergers and acquisitions - the aerospace industry is dominated by a few very large firms (Gartzke 2010).

the UK is thus a characteristic of the industry that has clearly had an impact on the development of trade associations.

Figure 3: UK aerospace national distribution of companies

Source: (SBAC 2002)

Similarly to many other aerospace industries worldwide, the aerospace industry in the UK presents strong relations between industry actors and public actors including national, local and supranational policymakers and regulators. Notwithstanding a generalised elevated degree of government interference, there can be substantive national variations. The differences can be linked to the structure of political systems and can range from outright ownership and control of the industry, such as during the former Soviet Union, to private-based configuration, such as in the United States (Hayward 1994). Nevertheless, even within the latter category national governments are extremely dependent on the industry, and possess the power to influence and shape it. Additionally, relations with policymakers within national borders, or across borders with supranational institutions may also change in time.

In relation to the military sector, the UK government enjoys the privileged status of sole buyer of defence products within national boundaries (House of Commons 2011). Through the power leveraged with procurement contracts governments are able to control the size of the national aerospace industry. Military campaigns characterised by increased

public spending on rearmament have aided the expansion of the industry, whereas periods of disarmament have negatively influenced the development of the industry (Hartley 2014). Employment figures are a useful source to underline the evolution and size of the industry. Records of employment in the UK aerospace industry (Table 3) clearly highlight how periods of war and peace have had an impact on the number of people employed, with spikes during the two World Wars and the Cold War, and a gradual reduction following the end of the arms race period (Hayward 1994).

Table 3: Employment figures in the UK aerospace industry.

Source: Hartley (2014)

Moreover, national governments can have an impact on the size and structure of the industry by selecting who is able to bid for government contracts (e.g. by limiting the bidding to home-country firms or allowing foreign firms to participate as well), choosing the form of competition (e.g. price or non-price characteristics), avoiding key contractors to go bankrupt, as well as control the ownership structure of the industry (e.g. by nationalising large companies) (Hartley 2014).

In terms of the civil market, governments retain the ownership of landing and take-off, and airspace rights, and have a large share of influence on airports either through direct ownership or the development of policy and regulations. Furthermore, governments might own airline companies (e.g. flag carriers) that are required to purchase products

from home-country companies. A major source of influence (and matter for on-going disputes between nations) relates to national governments providing direct or indirect support through funding of R&D projects, subsidies and contributions, through tax-subsidy incentives, launch investments, and other forms of grants and loans. Given the long lifecycle of aircrafts and the particularly lengthy periods of product development (Figure 4), R&D funding is a critical factor in relation to the industry's success.

Figure 4: Indicative example of a major aerospace lifecycle

Source: (AGP 2016)

Additionally, the high-risk nature as well as the susceptibility of the industry to strong fluctuations in demand has placed national governments as a significantly more consistent source of support than private investors (McGuire 2011). The only way that companies have partially managed to sidestep the need for public funding and mitigate the expenditures and high-risks of producing high-tech and costly products has been to develop joint projects and complex international networks (Hayward 1994). Nonetheless, it must be underlined that these interfirm collaborations have often been reliant on state aid as well. Finally, governments can provide advantageous export finance and together with departments and embassies can be crucial in the promotion of defence and civil-related exports (Hartley 2010).

3.3 Overview of the regional and national political-economic contexts

The following section provides a brief overview of the political and economic environment, which is necessary to understand, given substantial differences across

national contexts, the development of trade associations and their activities in a specific geographical setting. This is extremely relevant to the investigation of political activities, as "the culture, norms, values and institutions of a country will influence the type of NMAs [nonmarket activities] to use and their impact" (Fernández and Usero 2010: 2). The configuration of the political structure and activities of political institutional actors have a strong influence on where and how trade associations have flourished and how intermediaries and organisations representing business interests are able to interact with political actors. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this research is of interdisciplinary nature and thus "borrows" notions from other disciplines. This aspect is particularly evident in this section where notions stemming from political science are beneficial in highlighting the UK's specific political structure and public policy processes, and help to explore how these have impacted the development of specific forms of organisations (i.e. trade associations) and their political strategies.

As previously highlighted the UK is characterised by a pluralist system whereby "political power is widely distributed amongst many autonomous interest groups, each representing the social and economic forces in the wider society" (Hultén, Barron, and Bryson 2012: 353). This arrangement on one side has enabled trade associations to participate in the policymaking process, in contraposition to statist systems whereby it is extremely difficult for non-elites to enter the political arena. On the other side, it has fostered the growth of multiple entities that are able to provide an input in the policymaking process, limiting the ability of trade associations to exclusively represent business interests.

A further key characteristic of the UK's political structure refers to the marked dominance of the central government in the distribution of economic and political power (Grant 1989; Valler and Wood 2004), as opposed to other contexts (e.g. the US) where policymaking is strongly decentralised across the different states (Wilson 2003). Concurrently, parliament has a limited role - particularly in the early phases - in policy development. Nevertheless, given the configuration of the electoral system, MPs do play a key role as they have a strong connection with their constituencies, and this is particularly relevant for firms and trade associations that operate in constituencies that exhibit a strong aerospace presence. Together, these aspects entail that interest representation is mostly undertook with a limited number of political institutional actors

including regulatory agencies and civil servants (Boléat 2003), de-facto limiting the breadth of available options for interaction and influence.

Moreover, there have been various developments that have modified the policy framework to which trade associations and other organisations attempting to operate in the political arena have been confronted with. As abovementioned, the development of the European Union and its institutions has impacted the political activities of meta-organisations but it has also had consequences for national political institutions that have seen a transfer of power to these supranational entities (Macdonald 2001). Nevertheless, the main method used by trade associations, particularly smaller ones is to interact with national political institutions, which in turn will relate with European actors. This is mainly due to cost factors as it is cheaper, to engrained historical interactions that preceded the establishment of European Institutions, as well as to European bodies' processes that rely on the actions of national institutional representatives such as ministers and government officials (Bennett 1997b).

The devolution processes in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland have established local institutions with considerable powers and autonomy. However, the devolution process has been an extremely unbalanced project and even though the local political institutions feature elected assemblies, the extent of devolved powers varies considerably between Stormont (Northern Ireland), Cardiff (Wales) and Holyrood (Scotland). Thus, each context presents differences in terms of the executive, regulatory and legislative powers that have been accorded to them (Valler and Wood 2004). At present Stormont is subject to direct rule, the Scottish Parliament has considerably more power than the Welsh Assembly, and Scotland has a different legal system to England and Wales.

Similarly, England has seen the establishment of RDAs (Regional Development Agencies) and subsequently to their abolishment the development of LEPs (Local Enterprise Partnerships) as attempts to decentralise policymaking and foster economic growth and a greater extent of autonomy at regional level (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions 2002; Sandford 2013). Eight RDAs were set up by the Labour government in 1999 across England (Valler et al. 2004). It must be highlighted that devolution processes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not equivalent to the attempted transfer of authority and responsibilities that have characterised the RDAs,

as the latter are to be considered as a timid experimentation of regionalisation (Hazell 2000)[29]. It is reasonable to suppose that future consequences of the changing policy framework such as the proposed developments regarding shifts of authority towards local contexts, as mentioned in the recent Industrial Strategy White Paper (BEIS 2017), regional centres of economic growth such as the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine (HM Treasury 2016; Department for Communities and Local Government 2017), or the UK leaving the United Kingdom will implicate further transformations in business-government interactions.

The UK's economy is characterised by a market-oriented approach, which entails a limited role of the state. The political economy of the last decades of the twentieth century was formed by two divergent views (Greenwood and Traxler 2007). The first one relates to the support of manufacturing industries stemming from the industrial revolution, which proposed interactions between the state and business actors. However, the collective organisation of manufacturing businesses was problematic as the UK highlighted an "engrained belief in autonomy of the individual firm" (Moran 2006: 455). The second relates to the growing role of free-market capitalism. During the Conservative governments headed by Margaret Thatcher various reforms were implemented, which other than bringing the UK closer to the second approach, limited the authority of organised interests (Crouch 1995; Greaves 2008). Overall, the political economy in the UK has contrasted the development of strong interactions between the government and business (Valler and Wood 2004).

3.4 Charting the development and peculiarities of UK trade associations

3.4.1 Historical and legislative background

The UK's history of collective action in the business environment, particularly trough trade associations, is characterised by contrasting dynamics. On one side there have been several, yet ineffective, attempts to organise and structure collective action and business interests to provide government and other political institutions with recognised organisations that would become the preferred channel of interaction between the public

[29] The author recognises differences in the policy framework between the individual devolved administrations and between the devolved administrations and RDAs; however, it is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed account of these variations.

and private sectors (Grant 1993). On the other side, factors including the contraposition between the financial sector and manufacturing firms, as well as rivalries in business representation, hindered the development of strong trade associations (Moran 2006). An additional notion that must be underlined relates to the fact that strong individual entrepreneurial activity resulted in the modern state being developed after the industrialisation processes and this further exacerbated the predilection towards limited state intervention (Greaves 2008).

Keystones in the history of trade associations have been the work undertaken by Lord Devlin in the early 70s and by Lord Heseltine in the mid 90s. Both policy makers aspired to regulate associations in order to improve the power and capabilities of businesses as well as their interactions with government as there was the recognition that organisations representing business interests were excessively fragmented and unproductive. In 1972 the Devlin Commission on Industrial and Commercial Representation advocated the establishment of a Confederation of British Business (Devlin Commission 1972). Whilst in 1993, during a speech to the CBI and through subsequent government publications Lord Heseltine, the president of the Board of Trade, sought to strengthen trade association representation and render them more effective organisations (Boléat 1997). The government's policy strategy was to encourage the self-development of associations by promoting larger organisations, namely lead organisations that could represent broad industries allowing the government to have representative associations with which they could interact more easily (Bennett 1997b). Moreover, the government proposed that it would only interact with one organisation from each sector (Grant 2001), but ultimately efforts to change the configuration of business associations did not have effect and the arrangement remains highly fragmented (Bennett and Payne 2000; Grant 1983). Even though the recommendations did not lead to any specific developments, these efforts served as a catalyst for many associations and firms to rethink the role and functions of collective organisations, as well as mark the beginning of several mergers and coalitions between associations (Macdonald 2001). As a result, the 1970s and 1980s saw an evident increase in the number of trade associations being formed (May, McHugh, and Taylor 1998). Nevertheless, rather than direct government activities, the "indirect impact of government structures" has been the key factor in shaping trade associations' development in the UK (Valler and Wood 2004: 1839).

In recent years, on the backdrop of regulation developed at European level, there have been further attempts by British policymakers to legislate on collective interest organisations through the development of policy and standards on consultations with external stakeholders, such as the Code of Practice on Written Consultation, prepared in 2001 by the Cabinet Office and consequently revised several times (Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform 2008). The Code defines broad guidelines for consultations with external stakeholders whilst elaborating policy and legislation, however it "does not have legal force and does not prevail over statutory or mandatory requirements" (Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform 2008: 5). The efforts to regulate the interactions between private and public bodies have been undertaken to broaden consultation to firms with fewer resources and thus less able to interact with political institutional bodies, as well as recognise the role of associations and other bodies representing broad and collective interests.

Nevertheless, coherently with the political and economic notions highlighted above, such as the pluralist political arrangement and a limited role of the state, as well as a market-oriented approach, the regulatory and legislative framework in which trade associations have developed and currently operate is relatively unhampered by regulations and is rather characterised by a general laissez-faire approach. Hence, there is no specific legislation on trade associations (Greenwood and Traxler 2007) that requires them to be registered or to publish accounts (Boléat 2003). Additionally, associations can take various legal formats including: a company limited by guarantee, a company limited by shares and an unincorporated structure" (Greenwood and Traxler 2007: 318).

This legislative freedom is reflected in both the internal relations with firms, as well as in the external relations with governments and other public bodies. In terms of the first, which differs consistently from other European nations (e.g. Germany) there are no structural incentives (e.g. collective bargaining processes) for firms to join them (Bennett 1997b)[30]. This produced competitive forces amongst associations to compete with each other in order to broaden their membership (Bailey and Rupp 2006). In terms of the latter, interactions are relatively unstructured and voluntary, as trade associations do not enjoy

[30] Up to 1979 there had been sympathetic instances to collective agreements, however these were dismantled by reforms undertaken by the Thatcher government (Traxler, Blaschke, and Kittel 2001).

a "formalised state recognition" (Bennett 1997b: 13). Moreover, the effects of such a laissez-faire approach, and the feature that in the UK business associations do not have a statuatory status, has meant a weak national integration and that the size and fragmentation is similar to the US (Bennett 2000). In the words of Valler and Wood, trade associations in the UK "have lacked the financial, organisational, personnel, and political resources that derive from the public law status and obligatory membership arrangements found in other European context" (2004: 1840).

There are several factors that have exerted pressure on trade bodies in the UK. At the national level, the devolution processes have brought positive and negative consequences to trade associations. On a negative note, this additional layer of decision-making has placed extra costs on trade associations as these have been forced to monitor developments at this specific sub-national level and, when necessary, engage with them. On the positive side, trade associations particularly the regional ones, have had a local institutional counterpart with whom they could directly relate to. This meant that for specific matters they would not have to interact with policy-makers in Westminster and Whitehall. At a broader supranational level the development of European institutions has had several impacts on the development and roles of UK trade associations. The first relates to the need for these organisations to focus on the activities stemming from Brussels, as these would have an increasing effect on businesses in EU member states. The development of the legislative environment and the growing impact of European level regulations, bureaucracy and laws on British businesses forced trade associations to add an additional operational level that would necessarily have to transcend national borders. This inevitably led to an increase in costs and the need for supplementary resources to tackle these tasks. Strictly linked to this feature has been the formation of trade associations or federations at the European level, such as ASD, that would help national associations manage this new legislative environment. It is nevertheless important to highlight that UK trade associations undertook activities in continental Europe even before the formation of the European Institutions (Bennett 1997b).

3.4.2 The aerospace context

The UK aerospace industry currently exhibits a strong trade association involvement, which is evidenced at both national and regional level, as well as through sectorial and

industry-wide associations. The main differences between industry wide and sectorial organisations concern the specific industry expertise that the latter organisations have, as well as profounder relationships with companies, particularly the smaller firms. Geographically, there are national trade associations, which are generally headquartered in London and may have regional offices, as well as regional trade associations, which represent members in specific areas. The latter have come to exist as a result of clusters of firms being formed in various areas in the UK.

Aerospace companies can thus be members of industry wide organisations and/or sectorial associations, which can be represented as a continuum[31]. On one side, the first typology of organisation represents the entire industrial base and is lead by organisations such as the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) and the Confederation of British Industries (CBI). The CBI represents over 190,000 businesses and has 13 offices across the UK, as well as representation overseas, such as in Brussels and Washington (CBI 2017). In the middle, there are other organisations that operate at national level such as the EEF - The Manufacturers' Organisation (EEF)[32] and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). The first represents manufacturing and engineering companies, whilst the latter represents small and medium-sized firms. The similarities between the two organisations are that they represent businesses across a variety of sectors and have operative offices across the country. At the other end of the spectrum, there are the associations that represent specific industries or subsectors of industries.

The ADS Group is based in London and is the national body representing the Aerospace, Defence, Security and Space industries and can be considered as the most important sectorial body in these sectors. The ADS Group was established in 1915 as the Society of British Aircraft Constructors and then in 1964 changed name to the Society of British Aircraft Companies (SBAC) (Gale 2016). In 2009 the SBAC, which was originally solely

[31] As mentioned in Chapter 2 there are also other typologies of trade associations such as organisations that enable individuals to join as well, and various of them are key towards representing business and/or industry interests to policy makers. In the UK the main national representative bodies are the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE), the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) and the Institute of Directors (IOD). However, the focus of this study is on sectorial trade associations, specifically those that can be considered as meta-organisations.

[32] Until 2003 the organisation was called the Engineering Employers' Federation (Drives & Controls 2003)

dedicated to aerospace, merged with the Defence Manufacturers Association and the Association of Police and Public Security Suppliers to form ADS. The association runs the Farnborough International Air show through its Farnborough office, which is one of the most important air shows in the world, alongside the Paris Air show (Le Bourget) and the Dubai Air show (ADS 2017). ADS has regional offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland that were established to interact with local governments following the devolution processes, as well as overseas offices in Toulouse and India.

Furthermore, companies operating in the aerospace and defence sectors across the UK have the opportunity to join a number of sectorial regional trade associations (Table 4).

Table 4: Overview of regional trade associations in the UK aerospace industry

Trade association	Description	HQ	Membership
North West Aerospace Association (NWAA)	Founded in 1994, the North West Aerospace Alliance is the key industry organisation in the region, representing and uniting companies and organisations involved in the aerospace sector supply chain.	Preston	220
Midlands Aerospace Association (MAA)	The Midlands Aerospace Alliance was formed in 2003 to support and represent the aerospace industry across the Midlands region.	Coventry	300
Isle of Man Aerospace Cluster (IOMAC)	The Isle of Man Aerospace Cluster was founded in 2006 and offers cost-effective, joined-up solutions for its global blue-chip client base. As part of the North West Aerospace Alliance one of the most active aerospace clusters in Europe, the Cluster is part of one of the most influential "aerospace hotspots" in the UK.	Douglas	22
Aerospace Wales	Founded in 2001, the Aerospace Wales Forum is the trade association for all companies operating in the Aerospace & Defence sector in Wales and exists to provide the best service we can to assist our members by promoting your company in our capabilities database and giving you access to events, networking opportunities and industry expertise.	Bridgend	170
West of England Aerospace Forum (WEAF)	The West of England Aerospace Forum is a membership trade association that champions and supports the interests of the aerospace and defence industry in the South West of England. The forum leads the sector in delivering national supply	Clevedon	300

	chain initiatives, which connect the SME community to the Primes.		
Farnborough Aerospace Consortium (FAC)	Farnborough Aerospace Consortium is a not-for-profit trade association acting as a facilitator of business between large global primes and the supply chain and as an enabler of business support to its members and partners. It is one of the largest and most established aerospace and defence associations in the UK, providing support to, and furthering the long-term strategic growth of the sector in the South East.	Farnborough	300

Source: Author's compilation based on data gained from trade association documentary sources.

There is a further local level, which is embodied by associations such as the Coventry and Warwickshire Aerospace Forum (CWAF), however this latter typology is rather an avenue for small firms to collaborate and network locally (CWAF 2016). Moreover, these forums are not highly structured and the individuals leading them are generally involved in running their own companies.

In line with the notions regarding the general structure of regional bodies in the UK, which have been historically underdeveloped (Valler and Wood 2004), there are considerable differences between the national and regional associations and the most evident dissimilarities concern structure, size and resources. ADS, similarly to most national associations operating in other sectors, enjoys larger resources than regional associations including a higher number of employees as well as a defined governance structure (Figure 5), which includes several committees and special interest groups that are composed of elected member firm representatives. Moreover, national associations are able to combine their member companies' interests and should represent the national sectoral interest (Tedlow 1988). In contrast, regional associations are characterised by extremely limited resources and limited employees. Some regional trade associations are almost entirely run by the managing director or CEO with limited administrative support.

Figure 5: ADS Group governance structure

Source: ADS (2017)

In relation to political activities, the sectorial regional and national trade associations work collaboratively towards influencing the policymaking process through the "Aerospace and Defence Federation", which allocates the national entity (i.e. ADS) the power to represent the collective membership in the political field and the smaller associations a marginal political function, as evidenced by its stated purpose:

> The Aerospace and Defence Federation has been formed as a result of the Regional Trade Associations (RTAs) working together for the benefit of its combined Membership. The Federation acts to provide a single 'voice' for Aerospace and Defence industry members, but also provides autonomy to work at a regional level, when opportunities arise (WEAF 2017).

Nevertheless, regional associations have divergent levels of presence and influence in their socio-political arenas. One of the most prolific and dynamic settings has been the southwest, where the WEAF has proactively helped to create Innovation Aerospace (iAero), which is a collaboration between the aerospace industry, local institutions including the LEPs, local government as well as local universities (Heart of the South West LEP 2017).

3.5 Summary and context justification

This chapter has presented the context of the study by offering an overview of the value of the aerospace industry and a description of the political and economic institutional environment in which trade associations operate. In addition, it has presented a brief account and development of trade associations in the UK. This concluding section underlines the reasons and justifications for exploring the role and functions of trade associations, as well as the focus on their political activities in this particular sector.

Investigating business-government relations is particularly insightful in sectors that exhibit a robust interaction with political actors. The reasons that make the UK aerospace industry an extremely favourable setting to explore the relations between business and political actors can be divided in three broad categorisations: institutional, industry and firm specific. These categories underline, on three different levels, the strong "degree of politicization" (Lawton and Rajwani 2011: 172) of this industry.

First, at the institutional level, political actors and decision-makers value the aerospace industry due to its economic contributions to the national economy through the employment of highly skilled people, a high level of exports and technology spill overs to other sectors (e.g. Hartley 2014; Rhodes 2014). The military relevance of the industry has historically meant strong interconnections between government and companies that produced military products. Moreover, the liberal and deregulated environment in which trade associations operate combined with the necessity of political actors to gain expert information to develop policy, places sectorial trade associations in a position of strength to be examined as they will need to develop complex political strategies to attempt to influence the policymaking process.

Second, at industry level, the aerospace context is characterised by a strong level of legislative and political institutional involvement, which has resulted in this sector being extremely regulated. As previously mentioned, high levels of regulatory intervention will drive firms to participate in political action and bear the costs of operating in the political arena and to develop political strategies (Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015). Individual firms in the aerospace industry are thus heavily involved in developing political strategies through their in-house government affairs offices, political and communication consultancies, as well as by developing collective activities through trade associations

and other intermediary organisations. Moreover the industry exhibits a high trade association involvement, including industry-wide organisations as well as sector specific associations. This is further evidenced by the quantity of trade associations operating at the national level and also at the regional and local level. This is evident not only through subsidiaries of national trade associations but also through the widespread establishment of regional trade associations across the country.

Third, at firm level, individual companies exhibit strong interactions with government and government departments. As abovementioned, this happens within the military sector as well as in the civil sector. Clearly, firms that manufacture military products will enjoy a stronger level of involvement given that the national government is a major customer. Moreover, firms heavily rely on government, government departments as well as other political institutions (e.g. embassies and consular representations) to promote the industry and its products abroad and unlock new market opportunities (Department for International Trade 2015). As stressed by Bonardi, Holburn, and Vanden Bergh (2006) firms that have their business considerably affected by governments, are expected to be highly involved in developing political activities and establishing strong relations with political actors. Again, this feature will have repercussions on the role and functions of trade associations, as these necessary interactions can be then transferred within trade associations operating within this specific sector. Trade associations that have amongst their members companies that enjoy strong interactions with government and high levels of political capital may experience advantages that trade associations in other sectors will not have. Moreover, given the intertwined relations between government and firms, the latter will need, in specific circumstances, trade associations to convey delicate and sensitive messages as to not expose themselves politically.

An additional justification resides in the timing in which this study took place. The data was collected in the time spanning the lead up to the Brexit referendum, subsequent the result to leave the European union, and first phases of the negotiations. All business sectors will probably be affected (KPMG 2017), however the aerospace sector is in a particularly delicate position given the importance of international collaborations and mobility of aerospace employees, the involvement in R&D programs funded by the EU,

and the relationship with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)[33] (RAeS 2017). Hence, this is a particularly significant feature as business actors including firms and trade associations increased their participation in the political arena to influence the development of new policies and regulations that will come into place once the UK definitely leaves the European Union (Liedong and Rajwani 2017).

Finally, in addition to the abovementioned features, focusing on a specific sector has helped delineate a well-defined research context, narrow the focus of the research and examine in greater detail and depth the role and functions of trade associations.

[33] EASA is the EU regulatory body that grants access to the European market, and facilitates trade with other EU states (EASA 2017).

Chapter 4 Research approach

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that is adopted in this thesis, including the research design and methods employed. Specifically, it emphasises the benefit of undertaking a qualitative research approach centred around interviews, as this enables to capture individuals' perceptions. Thus, a comprehensive research design is developed based on qualitative methods to reach the aim of this research, which is it to explore the role and political activities undertaken by trade associations in the context of the UK aerospace industry.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Section 4.2 discusses the philosophical considerations including the ontological and epistemological perspectives, providing an answer to the basic foundational questions that underpin this enquiry. Section 4.3 provides an overview of the research design and underlines the case study strategy and the adoption of institutional mapping. Section 4.4 provides a detailed report of what data is collected, as well as how and why it is collected, highlighting the main source of data, which are in-depth semi-structured interviews. Section 4.5 offers an in-depth outline of the data analysis process, providing the data structure as an effective and visual representation of a rigorous and systematic approach to analysing the collected data. Together the sections emphasise how validity and reliability of this research - from the research design to the collection and analysis of the data - are ensured throughout the entire process.

4.2 Philosophical considerations

Preceding the description of the research design that is developed for this research, which includes the logics used to develop knowledge - meaning the tools and techniques implemented to generate and analyse data - it is necessary to acknowledge and underline the research philosophy that serves as a foundational pillar of the design (Blaikie 2009; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2012). Researchers can be informed by a wide array of philosophical stances (Elliot 2014), however, given the limitations of this thesis these cannot be covered extensively. Nevertheless, the crucial notion that will be highlighted is to understand that each philosophical worldview will have an influence on the research design, methods and approaches (Creswell 2014).

The main philosophical paradigm that establishes the foundations of this research and informs methodological choices can be ascribed to the interpretative paradigm. In contrast to the positivist approach, which is rather associated to quantitative research, this view is in line with qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). The positivist approach implies that knowledge is defined in an objective way, and that the researcher "observes and measures the reality that exists out there" (Creswell 2014: 7). In juxtaposition, the interpretivist paradigm rather denotes a constructed knowledge and that the researcher has an active role in defining as well as constantly interpreting and modifying it.

According to Stake (2005) the researcher has a crucial role in creating and shaping evidence. Thus, knowledge is developed through the formation of concepts and models that are continually interpreted and modified by the researcher (De Massis and Kotlar 2014). Gephart (2004) argues that this paradigm is particularly relevant when the research aims to provide insights of a specific context and how this will shape a particular phenomenon.

This research is thus rooted in the interpretivist perspective as the researcher shares the perspective that reality is socially constructed, and the researcher has a key role in forming and shaping the evidence (Stake 2005). This philosophical perspective is coherent with both the overall strategy, as well as with the specific data collection and analysis techniques. With respect to the first, case study research - the proposed research strategy of this thesis, which will be covered in detail in the following sections - can endorse different philosophical perspectives. Whilst Yin (2014) rather follows the positivist approach, this research is aligned to other scholars (e.g. Bryman and Bell 2003; Denzin 2001; Miles and Huberman 1994; Stake 2005) who follow the interpretative paradigm.

With respect to the specific data collection and analysis methods, the adoption of a qualitative approach and specifically the use of semi-structured interviews provide an intensive method of investigation and create a rich understanding of the field of enquiry. Hence, knowledge is advanced through the development of themes and patterns "to make sense of human experience" (De Massis and Kotlar 2014: 17). Considering the exploratory nature of this study and the aim to understand participants' subjective

perspectives that have been used to unearth underlying concepts, this philosophical approach enables the researcher to engage with participants and with the data stemming from the interviews and play an active role in constructing meaning. Hence, this allows for an in-depth investigation and a profound interaction with participants. Moreover, given that the objective of this study is to explore the role and political functions of trade associations in a specific industrial, socio-political and economic environment, the interpretivist stance is beneficial as it allows the researcher to retain a pronounced sensitivity to the specific context.

4.3 Research design

The following section describes the different stages and procedures that are involved in the development of the research design. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012: 196) the research design is "the way research questions and objectives are operationalized into a research project". Thus, to address the questions and objectives, which have been highlighted in the previous chapter, a case study research design was developed, entailing qualitative methods. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009: 6) define qualitative methods as "the techniques associated with the gathering, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of narrative information", whereas quantitative methods are associated with numerical information.

Johnson and Harris (2003) state that quantitative and qualitative methods can be considered as two ends of a continuum. The former is useful when research is structured and is undertaken in an area that presents a sensible amount of existing knowledge and precise constructs. In contrast, the latter is useful when the enquiry is explorative and attempts to generate theory, as there is not enough knowledge to develop specific constructs, variables and relationships. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to analyse complicated environments and produce a wealth of in-depth data (Corbin and Strauss 2014), as well as "thorough descriptions of actual actions in real-life contexts" (Gephart 2004: 455). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 32) argue "qualitative research settings do not operate on preset modelling on variables and their mutual correlational or casual relationships, but more on constant circularity and linking empirical analysis to a flexible literature review and theories". Hence, this approach requires a strong sensitivity

towards the context of the study rather than the adoption of pre-existing connections found in extant literature.

Additionally, Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2011: 42) state that qualitative methods "focus on understanding and *Verstehen* of experiences and behaviour, and on hearing the voices of people themselves". Understanding and *Verstehen* are two viewpoints that contribute to the comprehension of perceptions and behaviour. Whilst the first, focuses on the researcher's perception, the second focuses on the studied population's standpoint and understanding their perspective in their own context, specifically "studying people's 'lived experiences', which occur within a particular historical and social context" (Ormston et al. 2003: 11).

This research and the proposed approach are consistent with these notions as the main method of data collection are semi-structured interviews, which focus on gaining participants in-depth views and perceptions on the specific role of trade associations, the institutional environment in which they operate as well as their interaction with policy and decision-makers. Acknowledging and comprehensively understanding informants' perspectives, experiences and context is key when analysing the development of political strategy and the implementation of political activities. Hence, this study builds on the two circumstances advanced by Van Maanen, Dabbs, and Faulkner (1982) and underlined by De Weerd-Neerdhof (2001: 513) as "the use of close-up, detailed observation of the natural world by the investigator; and the attempt to avoid prior commitment to any theoretical model".

The qualitative approach is further justified by extant work on corporate political activity and business-government relations. Barron (2013), Barron, Pereda, and Stacey (2017), and Hillman and Wan (2005) are amongst numerous scholars who emphasise the difficulties on accessing information on corporate political activities, and Lux, Crook, and Woehr (2011: 241) advance calls for a qualitative approach, particularly through interviews. Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman (2006: 327) argue that qualitative methods are the most appropriate when "investigating the significance of political events and processes". The scholars build on Shaffer (1995) who highlights that this field of inquiry lies in an intricate context, where events are irregular and sporadic, thus stressing the effectiveness of a case study strategy, particularly when qualitative methodologies are

utilised. This qualitative approach is aligned with scholars who have explored lobbying activities through the adoption of in-depth interviews (e.g. Barron and Trouille 2016).

Moreover, with regards to the sensitivity and complexity of the topics touched within this study, it is difficult to envision that the same quality, richness and breadth of data could be gained through the submission of a questionnaire. As was witnessed by the researcher during the initial stages of the research, the establishment of relationships as well as gaining a position of trust was necessary to prepare for the actual interviews, place the informants at ease and gather the appropriate quality of data. Finally, the limited number of trade associations in the UK aerospace industry, as well as the limited number of individuals involved in political activities, are further justifications for the adoption of a qualitative approach.

Research approaches are frequently categorised in different ways, and whilst having recognised that qualitative methods are usually aligned with the inductive approach, this research design follows an abductive approach (Creswell 2014). This strategy is different to the classical categorisations of inductive and deductive approaches. It is rather a combination of both. Whilst the inductive approach "is intended to allow meanings to emerge from data as you collect them in order to identify patterns and relationships to build a theory" (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2012: 48), the deductive approach necessitates a clear theoretical stance from the outset that will be tested through the collected data. Furthermore, the inductive approach does not necessarily signify that theory developed within extant literature should not be considered. On the contrary, it enables the researcher to be theoretically informed, which will contribute to the definition of concepts that will be investigated during the research. Creswell (2014) states that qualitative researchers alternate the inductive and deductive reasoning. In line with this view, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) argue that numerous management and business scholars adopt the abductive reasoning approach. Thus, the entire research design entails an alternation of inductive and deductive reasoning rather than the adoption of one or the other (Suddaby 2006). The abductive approach allows the researcher to extend extant theories, and at the same time present new ideas, as can be appreciated in extant work in the field on business-government relations, for example Barron and Trouille's (2016) work that specifically focuses on lobbying.

Hence, the initial phases of the data analysis entail an inductive reasoning approach, whereas the latter phases attempt to place the emerging patterns and themes within extant theory. The adoption of such an approach, escaping inductive and deductive extremes is helpful towards maintaining a strong connection with the studied context (Hay 2002), ensuring the findings are grounded in the data and that informant viewpoints are preponderant.

4.3.1 Research strategy: the case study approach

This research entails a case study approach, which given the sensitivity, lack of information and the exploratory nature, was considered to be the most appropriate (Stake 2005). This particular approach enables the adoption of a multiplicity of research methodologies and allows drawing together a wealth of complex data (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Gillham 2000). Hence, it allows methodological triangulation, as well as the triangulation of sources. Yin (2014: 92) argues that any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be "much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information following a corroborative mode". This is a key aspect as this research focuses on converging data from different sources of the aerospace industry stemming from firms, associations, political and regulatory institutions, as well as from a wealth of other entities operating within this specific context. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005: 114) suggest that this method is a "qualitative and field-based construction and analysis of case studies" which often encompasses data gathering from numerous sources. Moreover, a clear benefit is that the case study strategy allows the design and analysis to be tailored to the research questions and objectives (Meyer 2001).

Case studies can be viewed as a mere method for collecting data, or used - as in this thesis - in a holistic approach as a comprehensive strategy (Stake 1995; Verschuren 2003; Yin 2003). There are a variety of definitions presented within the literature. Simons (2009) argues that methods of data gathering are subdued to the commitment of investigating what arises from real events as well as the actual definition of the case study. The author further defines case studies as "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a "real life" context" (Simons 2009: 21). Whitfield and Strauss (1998: 103) describe them as "a research strategy that is used to study one or more selected social phenomena

and to understand or to explain the phenomena placing them in their wider context". This is in line with Yin (2014), who states that case studies are appropriate and advantageous when the investigation is centred on a contemporary set of events, over which the researcher has little or no control and when the research questions that are been asked relate to "how?" and "why?" questions. Flyvbjerg (2006: 221) in advancing case study research stresses "case study produces the type of context-dependent knowledge that research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts[34]". Consistently with these notions this research explores trade associations in their specific context.

There are several approaches to developing case studies, which differ in the general design and structure. On one hand, scholars advance a structured approach. For example, Yin (2014) lists the necessary components of case study strategy: the research questions (which have to be original and informed by the literature review), the propositions (which enable the researcher to focus on what should be examined), the unit(s) of analysis, the logic linking data and propositions, and the criteria for interpreting findings. Other scholars argue for a more flexible and iterative approach, entailing "interplay between data collection, analysis and analytical framework" (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008: 129), rather than a standardized approach that could limit the understanding of the specific phenomenon (Dubois and Gadde 2002). This research is in line with the latter approach as the development of the theoretical framework is developed during the research whilst interpreting the findings and linking these with theoretical insights, rather than at the outset of the study, which might have limited the understanding of the studied phenomena (Dubois and Gadde 2002; Van Maanen, Dabbs, and Faulkner 1982). This approach has entailed openness to the broad range of theories that have been used to investigate CPA, nonmarket strategy and business-government relations (as mentioned in Chapter 2), which is in line with the exploratory nature of this research and involved selecting the most appropriate perspectives during the data analysis process. As will be underlined in the following sections this is consistent with the abductive approach and iterative processes of data collection and analysis.

[34] Virtuoso relates to the qualitative advancement in the learning process. This notion is clearly defined in Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) work.

Eisenhardt (1989: 533) stresses that case study strategy is exceptionally appropriate to organisation and management studies as it supports "understanding the dynamics present within single settings", by exploiting a multiplicity of perspectives and variables, thus highlighting the several factors that characterise a studied phenomenon. Case study strategy is suitable to cope with the circumstances in which there are multiple variables of interest that are rooted in the context of examination. This feature is extremely beneficial to this research because the area of business-government relations lies at the intersection of various independent systems (i.e. private and public), which constantly interact. The several perspectives are necessary to comprehensively acknowledge the peculiarities of the interactions between firms, associations and political institutions and simultaneously take into account the social and political environment and its norms, rules and regulations.

There is a variety of different types of case studies that can be undertaken and the choice of one over another is given by the overall research objective (De Massis and Kotlar 2014). Yin (2014) argues that there are three main categorisations: exploratory, when the purpose is to comprehend how a phenomena occurs and can offer a pilot research; explanatory, when the purpose is to comprehend why a phenomena takes place; descriptive, when the case study's aim is to underline the importance of a phenomena. Stake (2005) proposes three different case study typologies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The first, relates to understanding the purpose of the research. The second relates to understanding a specific matter within the case. The third relates to several case studies that aim to comprehensively understand a phenomenon, which transcends each individual case. An additional categorisation offered by Babbie (2007) differentiates between studies that confirm or modify theoretical concepts, and ones that propose new conceptualisations. This research is primarily exploratory in nature as it attempts to explore trade associations' specific role, as well as understand how trade associations develop their political strategy, and exert their influence. However, descriptive features are combined and integrated in the research as well.

There are additional differentiations in the case study methodology, as it can be designed and developed as single or multiple case studies, comparative or longitudinal, holistic or embedded, and intensive or extensive. This is another area where scholars have divergent opinions. On one side, scholars (e.g. Herriot and Firestone 1983) argue that single case

studies require an extraordinary level of access. However, these are more suitable when the case is "critical, unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal" (Yin 2014) and presents robust descriptive and persuasive features (Siggelkow 2007). Whereas, in contrast Dubois and Gadde (2002: 557) stress that multiple case studies allow researchers to cover more breadth but are very limited in terms of the depth of the findings. Furthermore, case studies enable the researcher to embrace a longitudinal perspective instead of focusing solely on a snapshot in time. This feature is important to capture information regarding the development of trade associations over time, as well as on policy developments, which can be lengthy. A comparative case study was initially considered, however it was recognised that it would be more advantageous to understand the intricacies and complexities of this unique industrial sector, and contemplate undertaking a comparative approach in future research.

There are a number of limitations within the case study approach that should be highlighted, as this acknowledgement could assist the researcher to anticipate and avoid them. Scholars (Johnston, Leach, and Liu 1999: 201) have highlighted that this approach has been criticised for the lack of objectivity and methodological rigour and call for a systematic methodological approach. The collection of data in an open way, as is done when adopting qualitative methods, can lead to the potential risk of acquiring a disproportionate quantity of data that has to be managed and analysed (Johnson and Harris 2003; Harrison 2002). As a consequence of the openness and richness of the information, one of the pitfalls could arise from the different interpretations and from the biased nature of the sample and information. Furthermore, these data collection methods can be time and resource consuming. Keddie (2006) argues that this approach does not allow generalisation, as the cases will not be sufficiently representative, and qualitative case studies are frequently criticised for the inability to generalise to wider populations. This view is guided by a misinterpretation of the concept of generalizability in the case study approach (Blaikie 2009) as this should be substituted by the concept of 'fittingness'. While undertaking qualitative research, generalizability should be rather considered as the 'fit' concerning the researched context and another to which researchers could apply the same notions and assumptions (Sarantakos 2005). Similarly, Yin (2014) suggests that case studies are not intended to generalise to different populations, generalizability rather refers to the process that stems from empirical observations towards theory, hence

generalizability towards theoretical propositions. In this study the aim is not to develop outcomes that can be generalised across different organisations, operational areas, industries and/or countries, it rather concerns the exploration and the in-depth understanding of business-government relations in a particular and defined context.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages that have been highlighted, these do not outweigh the advantages to be gained from the use of this research approach in such a complex and multifaceted study.

4.3.2 The definition of the case study

The selection of case studies is a critical decision in the research design, and the choice is mainly given by how suitable a case is in revealing a particular phenomenon. There are several debates surrounding the design and implementation of case studies – especially selecting the case itself - and the main issue of contentious commonly stems from the different philosophical perspectives (Piekkari, Welch, Paavilainen 2009). For example, scholars who adopt a positivistic stance (e.g. Yin 2014) favour a rigid design, bounding the study to set research questions, objectives and a clear theoretical framework. In contrast, scholars (e.g. Dubois and Araujo 2004; Stake 2005) who favour alternative stances, such as the interpretivist perspective, argue that the decision of the actual case and unit of analysis will be developed during the data collection phase, as access is gained and empirical evidence collected (Ragin 1992). Coherently with the philosophical perspective, as well as the iterative and qualitative process adopted within this study, the latter approach was favoured as a broad sample was defined at the beginning but was refined as access was gained and data was collected during the research (as discussed in section 4.4.3).

This thesis develops an extensive case study on trade associations representing manufacturing firms in the UK aerospace industry. The choice of the UK aerospace industry is largely given by its political and economic strategic importance and because the industry can be considered as a "political salient industry" (Mahini 1988). Thus, the relations between the private and public spheres are relatively easily observable, which can be considered as an advantage for the exploration of this particular topic. The choice of this sector is in line with previous studies that have examined business-government relations and lobbying characteristics given its significant level of politicization (e.g.

Lawton and Rajwani 2011). Several aerospace industries were taken into consideration, and initially the broader European level was contemplated; however due to various limitations (e.g. access to data constraints), and information gained through pilot interviews, the UK context was considered to be the most appropriate. Moreover, it must be considered that the influence and effectiveness of associations can vary depending on the industries and sectors in which they operate (Greenwood 2002). Specifically, as highlighted in Chapter 3, the UK aerospace industry exhibits precise characteristics that are highly beneficial to understand the role of associations and to the examination of the dynamics that govern private-public interrelation. For example the political and economic strategic importance that is given to this particular sector (Hartley 2014), the strong trade association involvement and high levels of industry regulations (Grier, Munger, and Roberts 1991; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015), as well as individual firms' strong government interactions (Hadani 2012; Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002).

The units of analysis are regional and national trade associations representing manufacturing companies operating in the broader aerospace industry (i.e. military and civil sectors), whilst the units of observation are trade associations and firms, as well as industry experts. This study focuses on meta-organisations, namely organisations whose members are other organisations. Thus, this research focuses solely on the trade associations that represent firms operating in the manufacturing sector and not other organisations such as professional associations. These associations were theoretically selected (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007: 27), as they are particularly suitable for revealing the underlying mechanisms involved in the development of trade associations' political activities as well as the relationship between the trade associations, firms and government actors. The selected trade associations are revelatory and extreme exemplars given their overall robust and durable connections with the policymaking arena. Additionally, the decision to focus on a specific industrial sector rather than trade associations in general has facilitated the collection of rich data on the inner workings of trade associations and relationships with political stakeholders (Barnett 2013).

A further consideration on the sampling of the trade associations refers to the distinction between the national and regional organisations as these can be considered as "polar cases" (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007: 27), in relation to their size, operational

environment, management and key political stakeholders, which can be advantageous in revealing contrasting patterns in the data.

4.3.3 Institutional mapping

Institutional mapping is a strategic instrument that is extremely advantageous and effective in identifying the main stakeholders and institutions, as well as comprehending the functions and relationships between them (Aligica 2006). This tool is commonly utilised in policymaking as well as social change initiatives, and the essential aim of "mapping" is to visualize and to reduce complexity. Aligica (2006) stresses that it is indispensable in acknowledging the institutions involved in a particular project, their role and relations. Moreover, it enables the identification of possible alliances and threats. Cummings and Doh (2000) argue that consequently to the notions that organisations operate in different environments contemporarily (i.e. market and nonmarket) there is the need to map these contexts according to the actors that populate them. They propose a framework that enables to ascertain the relevant stakeholders. The institutional map developed in Chapter 5 (Figure 10) is informed by extant scholarly literature, as well as by information gained during the in-depth interviews and documentary sources. This implies that the map, coherently with the entire research design has been subject to an iterative process and to modifications arising from the acquisition of new data and information.

Barley (2010) develops an institutional map of the US environment to highlight how organisations shape the institutional field and influence policymakers. The author argues that corporations use other organisations to amplify the messages they are attempting to convey to political actors and regulators. In their conceptual paper, Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips (2015: 228) stress "we can extend Barley's (2010) argument that corporations systematically build an institutional field to exert greater influence on government and see trade associations as proxies that fulfil this need". This study seeks to advance this argument and contribute to the extant debate by providing empirical evidence that trade associations' development of an institutional field is an integral part of their political functions.

This study applies institutional mapping for three main reasons. Firstly, to sample the main actors that are involved in the business-government interaction covered in this

research, as well as their interests and interactions; secondly, to justify the selected case study; thirdly, to develop rich data that can integrate the interview data. According to Aligica (2006: 82) "the measure of validity of an institutional map is given by its ability to guide the strategic decision making". With regards to this research, this can be translated in the ability of the developed map to understand the key actors in the business-government interface and how trade associations interact with these when undertaking political activities.

4.4 Data collection

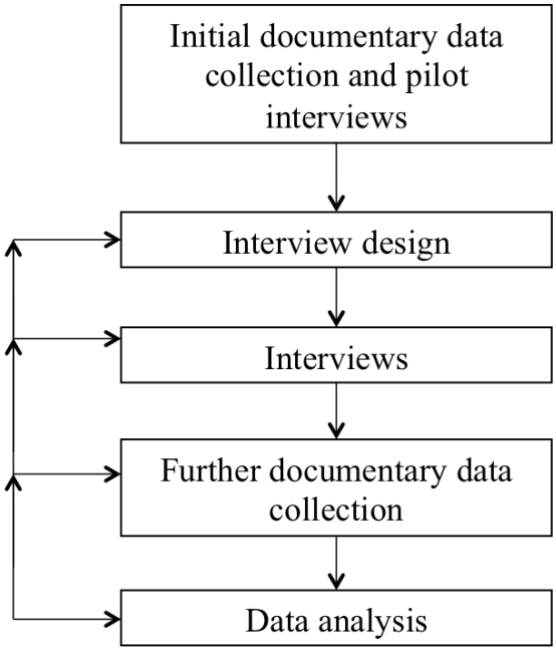
The following section highlights the process undertaken to collect data as well as the different sources that were utilised. It underlines how the data was collected and how it informed the research and contributed to the understanding of the researched phenomena (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015).

This research builds on the three principles of data collection in case studies: the utilisation of multiple sources of evidence such as interviews, archival data, media accounts, direct observations and secondary documentation; the creation of a case study database; and the maintenance of a chain of evidence (Yin 2014). The exploitation of different sources of evidence is necessary – during the collection and analysis processes - to converge and triangulate, which strengthens the findings, provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, enhances validity, credibility and reliability (Creswell 2014), and enables the integration of perceptual and objective data (De Massis and Kotlar 2014). Patton (1990) stresses that the respective sources of data are advantageous in comprehending the entire phenomenon and that integrating the various elements is highly beneficial in strengthening the findings. The creation of a database is beneficial in storing, categorising and documenting the results of interviews, notes, transcripts and other documents so that they are easily retrievable for the analysis and interpretation. The database further serves as a repository for the narrative and increases the reliability of the case studies (Baxter and Jack 2008). Finally, the maintenance of a chain of evidence is crucial as it enables tracing the information and processes from the research questions to the conclusions (Yin 2014). Additionally, a comprehensive and thorough chain of evidence is key in ensuring reliability as it allows other researchers to replicate the study (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2012).

4.4.1 An iterative process

This research has involved different stages of data collection and data analysis (the latter will be covered in the following section) through an iterative process that lasted several months as displayed in Figure 6. This particular approach can be considered as highly valuable as it has aided the development of the conceptual framework through the dialogue between extant literature and in-depth analysis of the collected primary and secondary data. Additionally, it has enabled the researcher to refine the research questions as new information was gained and thus providing a richer and more in-depth exploration of the phenomenon.

Figure 6: An iterative research design



Source: Elaborated by author

The first phase of data collection started a few months into the PhD when the researcher attended and presented the study at the Aerodays conference in London[35]. The event helped to make observations, relate with potential informants and start collecting documents that were available to conference delegates, which were advantageous in broadening preliminary knowledge on the structure and key players of the aerospace industry in the UK. In this period various pilot interviews were conducted, which were

[35] See Chapter 1 for additional information regarding the conference.

useful to identify key stakeholders and gain an initial understanding of the potential impact the research could have on the industry. This phase was followed by several phases of in-depth semi-structured interviews and documentary collection and analysis. This iterative process is advisable when undertaking qualitative studies (Corbin and Strauss 2008) and case study research (Partington 2002) as it helps the definition of a clearer focus and strengthens the conclusions. This particular approach is consistent with the research design used within this thesis.

A key aspect of the iterative data collection process has been the establishment of relationships with key informants and gatekeepers within the industry. As mentioned several times by different participants, the aerospace industry in the UK can be considered as a "small family" and many events, conferences and trade shows see the participation of the same people. Attending several of these gatherings, has surely been beneficial towards the development of relationships with actors, some of whom have been interviewed in due course, and others who have helped gain access to other key informants. Hence, developing relationships based on trust has been a crucial element of this research and data collection process (Daniels and Cannice 2004). This point is particularly relevant when considering elite interviews.

The overlap between data collection and analysis allows researchers to make on-going changes to some aspects of the research design and to identify new issues that are relevant for the research objectives. This iterative approach, including several stages of data collection assisted the reflective process on how to improve the data gathering process.

4.4.2 Triangulation of methods and sources

Triangulation is a central and evident aspect of this research, as using different sources, whilst moving between data collection, analysis and interpretation, usually characterises triangulation (Yin 1994). Moreover, triangulation within this research is undertaken on two distinct but intertwined levels: triangulation of methods and triangulation of sources (Denzin 1989).

The first is undertaken by adopting different methods of data collection. As aforementioned, the main research method adopted for this research to collect data is semi-structured interviews, which is sustained by primary and secondary documentation

such as company and association reports as well as institutional documents, at local, national and supranational levels. The adoption of different methods enables to triangulate and corroborate findings, as well as making them more accurate and substantial (Tracy 2010). In addition, triangulation is beneficial in validating the case study as well as in terms of avoiding limitations of individual methodologies. Verschuren (2003: 128) stresses that triangulating different methods prevents researchers from 'tunnel vision'. Stake (2005: 441) points out that triangulation ''serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen''.

A critical feature of data triangulation is that the findings should result from a convergence of the different sources of data. A typical pitfall is when researchers elaborate findings based on each individual and separate source of data and do not compare the evidence. It is thus necessary that facts or events be supported by various sources of evidence (Yin 2014). Hence, triangulating different sources is particularly relevant in terms of increasing the "representativeness and reliability of oral evidence" (Perks and Thomson 2003: 269). This approach has been consistently utilised throughout this research, as the data gained from documentary sources was methodically referred to inform the interview data. Hence, the information gathered from reports and archives served to triangulate the interview data.

The second typology of triangulation relates to the different sources and is particularly significant when conducting research on business-government relations, given the various actors involved with extremely different perspectives. Yin (1994) advocates that good case studies contain multiple sources of information, as these will provide strength to the research. In his work on MNC-Host government relations, Luo (2001) recommends gaining information from both the firms' perspective and from the institutional perspective. This is necessary to avoid developing research that is skewed towards the perspective of private organisations, and in contrast, being able to present a true picture and a reliable piece of research. In turn, the result of the research may not be one general explanation but rather the acknowledgement and understanding of diverse perspectives within the case.

These different forms of triangulation conducted within this project are in line with the advantages highlighted by Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005: 222) in that "[triangulation] can

produce a more complete, holistic and contextual portrait of the object under study". In the case study method this is particularly important, as you need to check and validate the information you receive from various sources.

4.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are frequently the most common primary source of data when conducting case studies (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007) as they offer numerous advantages, such as being collected for a specific study and providing rich and unique data (Ghauri and Grønhaug 2005). Primary sources of data are crucial in conducting research based on qualitative methods (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2012). According to Gillham (2000), this typology of data collection is considered to be the most appropriate when the topic is sensitive, which is the case for this particular study. De Massis and Kotlar (2014: 19) state that interviews are "targeted, insightful and highly efficient means by which to collect rich, empirical data". Additionally, qualitative interviews are context specific and propose the occasion to explore phenomena in depth, revealing evident relationships and processes.

Yeung (1995) contrasts rigid approaches to obtaining information and suggests the benefits of qualitative interviews. Quantitative methods such as questionnaires and surveys are advantageous when the objective of the data collection process is to collect data through a standardized and highly structured approach that will benefit the generation of data that can be analysed statistically.

There are several approaches to undertaking interviews, and these vary from highly structured to open-ended (Fontana and Frey 1994). Semi-structured interviews sit in-between this range and are a common qualitative method employed to collect data. They allow participants to answer through in-depth responses, and do not bind them to a structured guide giving them the ability to adopt a more conversational discussion. The most important feature that influenced the adoption of this particular approach, relates to the opportunity that this approach presented, such as revealing information that was not previously known. Adopting a more structured and predetermined approach would have restricted the conversation (Patton 2002) and prevented the surfacing of such knowledge.

Interviews present a series of limitations such as for example, respondent's bias, asking inadequate questions or when the informant supplies the researcher with information he wants to hear as opposed to providing objective answers (Travers 2001). To confront and moderate these risks and reduce bias all the interviewees are highly experienced and well-informed professionals who are able to bring into the research different perspectives (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). The different range of perspectives (Harrison 2002) gained through interviewing multiple typologies of informants (i.e. firm and trade association representatives, and industry experts), was key in confronting and crosschecking different sources of evidence and enabling triangulation. The interview guide was developed, whilst carefully contemplating these limitations. Ultimately, interviews are by definition limited, as only a definite number of contributors can be included in the project time, resource and financial constraints. In addition, not everyone that is considered as a relevant informant is available or willing to be interviewed.

When undertaking qualitative research that involves interviews, it is imperative to include the appropriate informants, whose background and knowledge is pertinent to the study. The sampling strategy combined both purposive (Kumar, Stern, and Anderson 1993; Siggelkow 2007) and snowball techniques to identify interviewees (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). The main criterion for inclusion of the participants was that they should have in-depth knowledge and/or experience in business-government relations in the aerospace industry, and on the role and inner workings of trade associations. Developing a strict sampling guide at the outset of this study would have limited the gathering of information and prevented to find additional informants. As abovementioned, the inclusion of different perspectives was a key factor when selecting participants. The distribution of the interviews amongst the different backgrounds is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of sources

Category	Trade association	Firm	Industry expert	Total
Number	8	14	7	**29**

Source: Elaborated by author

Nevertheless, some of the informants did not correspond to this broad sample and albeit they did not provide many specific insights to the specific research questions of this

research, they were instrumental in providing extensive knowledge on the nature, structure and complexities surrounding the aerospace industry. This information was essential when conducting interviews and approaching potential participants, as the researcher was able to demonstrate an extensive knowledge on the structure, composition and relevant terminology of this particular sector as well as demonstrate a broad network of relations within the industry.

The interviewees were selected and contacted through various avenues. The initial source was through personal contacts and connections. Subsequently, various informants were found and included after interviews had taken place. Several questions in the interview guide, related to the different stakeholders and key intermediaries in the aerospace industry, were formulated purposively to increase the understanding on the various actors and relationships as well as to identify new potential candidates. This particular technique was useful in terms of including participants that would not have been found through the sole analysis of secondary sources. In addition, access to these specific participants was not an issue as in several occasions introductions were made by an existing participant. An issue with snowballing is that of biased selection, as the new participants would be part of the networks of the informants that had already been interviewed. To overcome this potential issue, a continuous analysis of the secondary sources was undertaken as well as participation in various events to uncover additional participants. Hence, other participants were contacted through formal emails, which briefly introduced the research and enquired if they would be available to be interviewed.

Participants with various backgrounds were established to provide different perspectives on the studied phenomena and provide a balanced picture (Partington 2002). On the associations' side, CEOs, public affairs managers, policy managers and chief economists. Almost the entire population of sectorial trade associations representing the UK aerospace industry is covered. For each trade association the CEO or a senior representative was interviewed. On the firms' side the following were included: CEOs, companies' public affairs managers, government affairs managers, external relations managers, strategy managers. Firms' representatives were included for two main reasons: the first relates to firm representatives being involved (or have been close observers) in the definition of trade associations' political strategy, the second to provide an external perception to trade associations' role and functions. Moreover, several firm informants had previously

worked within trade associations and were familiar with their strategy development, which enabled them to provide a more independent view[36]. Industry professionals and sector specific experts[37], such as leading societies' managers were also interviewed to corroborate and triangulate the gained information, as well as to guarantee construct validity.

One limitation of this sample is the absence of interviewees from the institutional side. The researcher acknowledges the lack of information and data stemming from interviews with policy makers, regulators and politicians. This information would have enriched the data and been extremely helpful towards corroborating the information gained from informants representing the business category. There are several reasons that can be ascribed to the absence of this typology of informants including time and resource constraints and the presence of different networks. The latter aspect refers to the researcher gaining a position of trust and, as previously mentioned, relating with gatekeepers who offered introductions and were thus instrumental towards fostering new connections. However, these new links were in all cases industry professionals, hence pertaining to a "business network". It was acknowledged, and subsequently confirmed through discussions with leading CPA scholars, that fostering links with policy or government actors would require relationships with gatekeepers from the "political network". Nevertheless, as will be highlighted in the section concerning avenues for future research in the concluding chapter of this thesis, the inclusion of this additional typology of informants, would be a fruitful area for future investigations.

In line with existing studies on lobbying (e.g. Barron and Trouille 2016; Lawton and Rajwani 2011), and on meta-organisations (Berkowitz and Dumez 2015) the final number of interviews is relatively limited but sufficient to reach saturation and coherent with the advised methodological approaches for exploratory and in-depth inquiries (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). Table 6 provides an overview of the interviews that were conducted.

[36] It was found that it is common practice in the UK aerospace industry that firm employees are seconded to work in trade associations to gain a broader experience in government relations and public affairs.

[37] It must be highlighted that several industry experts included in the study had previous experience at senior level in working for a trade association in the aerospace industry.

Table 6: List of key informants

Interview number	Category	Position	Interview date	Time
1	Firm	Strategy Manager	18/08/15	1h
2	Firm	Senior Manager	14/09/15	1h
3	Industry Expert	Public Affairs Manager	29/10/15	1h
4	Firm	Strategy Manager	10/11/15	1h
5	Firm	VP External Relations Manager	03/03/16	1.5h
6	Industry Expert	Business Development Manager	29/03/16	45m
7	Firm	Communications Manager	31/03/16	1h
8	Firm	Senior VP Corporate	26/05/16	1h
9	Firm	CEO	08/06/16	45m
10	Industry Expert	Policy Manager	05/07/16	45m
11	Trade Association	President	06/07/16	30m
12	Trade Association	Head of Public Affairs	23/08/16	1.5h
13	Firm	Former CEO	12/09/16	1.5h
14	Industry Expert	Founder of aerospace association	26/09/16	1.5h
15	Trade Association	CEO	05/10/16	1.5h
16	Industry Expert	Head of Policy and Public Affairs	07/10/16	45m
17	Firm	Former CEO	01/11/16	1.5h
18	Trade Association	Manufacturing Specialist	21/11/16	1.5h
19	Trade Association	Chief Economist and director of Policy	24/11/16	1.5h
20	Trade Association	Former Head of Political and Economic Affairs	07/02/17	1.5h

21	Trade Association	Former Managing Director	28/03/17	1h
22	Firm	Senior VP	01/08/17	1h
23	Firm	Head of Public Affairs	01/08/17	1h
24	Trade Association	CEO	07/08/17	1h
25	Industry Expert	Strategy Manager	09/08/17	1h
26	Industry Expert	Aerospace and Defence Industry Analyst	25/10/17	1.5h
27	Firm	Group Head of Government Relations	22/11/17	1h
28	Firm	Director of Communications	11/12/17	1h
29	Firm	Deputy Head of Government Affairs	08/01/18	1h

Source: Elaborated by author

All the interviews were conducted by the researcher in order to increase the reliability of the study (Kvale 2007) and were frequently conducted at the informant's workplace. The location was often chosen by the interviewee, especially in cases where the contributor was in a senior management position. When the researcher was given the option, the company or trade association premises was chosen to have the possibility to observe the environment and to grasp all possible information that could complement the interviews, i.e. through observations (this method will be covered in the following section). Moreover, a practical consideration is that company headquarters would often provide meeting rooms, which are an appropriate environment to conduct interviews, in terms of both privacy and external disruptions.

Before the actual interview started, the project, the reasons and objectives of the study were introduced, as well as how the results would be disseminated. It was clarified that the informants would be anonymised if included in the study and that in order to guarantee anonymity, pseudonyms would be used if necessary. On average, the interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. Various interviewees were contacted again and asked additional questions via telephone and Skype calls as well as through emails.

A common interview guide or interview protocol was prepared, which ensured

consistency between the interviews, and was developed according to broad themes developed during the literature review. Gerson and Horowitz (2002) argue that undertaking interviews with the help of key themes as a guide is advantageous when conducting exploratory research as it enables the surfacing of issues that were not previously considered. However, given that informants derived from different backgrounds and had different perspectives (i.e. firm, trade association and industry expert) the interview guide was slightly adapted to each informant, as is common when conducting semi-structured interviews (Gioia et al. 2010).

The interview guide was initially informed by the review of extant literature and was subsequently modified as the study evolved with the information gained through interviews and the on-going analysis. Corbin and Strauss (2014: 93) stress "the questions we ask over the course of a research project will change over time. Questions are based on the evolving analysis and are specific to the particular research". Similarly, Farquhar (2012) argues that interviewing is an evolving procedure throughout which researchers gain additional understanding which will in turn influence the direction of the research. If the discussions lead towards an unexpected but interesting direction, this new lead would be followed, as new ideas, notions and concepts could emerge. When conducting semi-structured interviews, it is key to be open-minded, flexible and take advantage of arising opportunities. Hence, as the research progressed, interesting themes discovered during the interviews were included in the new interview guide or helped to refine existing ones. Moreover, the interviews gained additional depth because of the iterative approach of the data-gathering procedure, and because specific questions were formulated to gain informants views on the emerging patterns and findings. Table 7 presents an overview of the interview guide themes.

Table 7: Interview guide themes

Broad theme	Description
General	Motivations for firms to join trade associations, reasons for engaging with government and political institutions.
Institutional stakeholders	Perceptions on the key political and regulatory institutions and how trade associations interact with them. How these institutions affect operations and strategy development.

Intermediaries	Definition of industry intermediaries, role, functions, relationships with firms and trade associations.
Trade Associations	Role, functions, objectives, relationships with companies, political institutions and other intermediaries.
Political Activities	Organisation, approaches, platforms and differences between firms' and trade associations' political activities. Insights on how these have developed over time.
Institutional uncertainty	Perceived uncertainties, institutional change, impact on organisation and adaptation versus management.
Evaluation	Impact on policy, impact on firms, mediation and facilitation of business-government relations.

Source: Elaborated by author

Following discussions with the supervisory team, the interview guide was changed after an initial draft (Appendix 1 provides greater detail of the interview guide). The main changes concerned linguistic issues, as it was considered that many participants would probably not be familiar with academic jargon and with terminology used in the non-market strategy and corporate political activity literatures. Thus, the language was modified in order to make it more accessible to interviewees. This is echoed by Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) who encourage the adoption of simple and comprehensible language and cautious reflection on the terms commonly utilised in a specific research domain. The academic lexicon related to the field of "corporate political activity" was modified to encompass terms such as "interest representation", "business-government relations" and "lobbying". In turn, the word "lobbying" was eventually not included because of the negative connotations, which could potentially provoke mistrust within organisations and limit the data collection.

The majority of interviews were recorded with the help of recording equipment and subsequently transcribed. Recording interviews is widely recommended as it enables researchers to concentrate on the actual discussion rather than on taking notes. This in turn, aided the flexibility (Bryman and Bell 2003) of the interview as the researcher could completely concentrate on the actual interview and better react to the informants' answers, which clearly aided the 'smoothness' of the discussion. Moreover, recording the interviews was beneficial for the analysis as it helped gain new insights as these could be listened to numerous times.

However, some informants did not agree for the interview to be audio recorded, so the interview was undertaken whilst taking hand-written notes. The inability to record interviews could be considered as a limitation to data collection as several insights and notions could have been missed during the interview. Nevertheless, whilst the loss of precious data and information is unlikely contested, Peabody et al. (1990) argue that interviews conducted without the use of recording devices, ultimately may foster the openness of the conversation and allow the interviewee to share insights that would have not been mentioned otherwise.

Hence, it is necessary to reflect about the reasons behind participant's rejection to be recorded and how this can be considered as strength of this research rather than a weakness. It has already been mentioned that this research covers a very sensitive area, and many participants simply did not want their voice to be recorded when discussing such topics. There are two key implications that should be highlighted. The first is that without the fear of being recorded the interviewee was found to be in a more relaxed position and was freer to talk about aspects that would probably not have been mentioned otherwise. This aspect surely benefitted the research in terms of the richness and deepness of the obtained information. The second aspect relates to the development of a relationship of trust, with the informants. This aspect was highly beneficial as various informants were encountered on different occasions throughout the duration of the study. This was extremely helpful as the researcher managed to talk to the informants several times and elaborate or ask for clarification on certain aspects of the information gained during the interviews.

After each interview the data was transcribed as soon as possible, including notes and observations. Following this procedure is highly beneficial, as the data is recorded more accurately while in recent memory (Wengraf 2004). The information gained through hand-written notes was subsequently rewritten on a word processor and printed. The reliance on the researcher's notes and the absence of verbatim accounts for a minor number of interviews, had implications for the analysis as the researcher did not have the same amount of information as for the recorded interviews. However, this deficit did not privilege some interviews over others. Overall, this systematic approach was necessary in order to convey the notes into a suitable format, consistent with the other interviews,

and allow the effective development of the analysis.

As previously mentioned, the aim of this research is to explore the political activities of trade associations and understand how and why these organisations play a role within the context of business-government relations in the aerospace industry. The semi-structured interviews were essential in providing the level of detail and depth of knowledge on the different roles, activities and relationships between firms, trade associations and political institutions, which couldn't have been gained through the adoption of other methods. Specifically, the conversations with senior trade association managers revealed numerous insights in relation to the development of political activities and their implementation. Moreover, the rich information was particularly significant in terms of understanding the relation between the UK's socio-political environment and political activities.

The researcher ensured that university ethical rules, measures and guidelines were observed throughout the entire process. When undertaking interviews, several actions were undertaken to guarantee the fulfilment of ethical processes (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Each informant was presented a variety of documents that summarised the nature of the research and clearly informed why, when and how he/she would be interviewed. These documents included the summary of the research, the Participant Information Sheet and the Informed Consent Form, which also guaranteed the anonymity of the respondents (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4).

Given the sensitivity of the topic, particular care was given to ensure anonymity. Hence, all the information that could give away the identity of the informant was removed including names, and all informants were given a numerical reference. In terms of the quotes included in this thesis, the only information that is kept, is the background of the respondent (i.e. firm, trade association and industry expert) as this is necessary to contextualise the answers and highlight the different perspectives. Finally, the researcher ensured that data (in form of recordings or written material) was stored securely in accordance with the university's data protection policy (Appendix 5).

4.4.4 Elite interviews

As highlighted in the previous section, interviews took place mainly with company and trade association CEOs and senior managers. This typology of interviews can be

categorised as elite interviews. Harvey (2011: 433) defines elites as "those who occupy senior management and board level positions within organisations" and argues "that these people have significant decision-making influence within and outside of the firm and therefore present a unique challenge to interview".

The notion of elite interviews is particularly important in the political science domain as these actors are defined as "those with close proximity to power or policymaking" (Lilleker 2003) and are considered to have "more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public" (Richards 1996: 199). This is extremely relevant to corporate political activities, as in many circumstances the political activities are implemented at the highest levels of organisations.

A further consideration on the benefits of elite interviews relates to the seniority level of the new informants that were accessed due to personal referrals and introductions made by the "elite" interviewees. When concluding the interviews, the researcher would always ask the interviewee if he could be referred to other potential interviewees. Even though this was not always successful, in various cases it led to access top-level managers that would usually be out of reach. In this respect, Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012: 11) highlight how occasions for lengthy interviews with business leaders are rare. Introductions by elite participants presented an additional advantage in terms of the sincerity and reliability of the information gained from new participants as the researcher gained a position of trust. This also limited the negative aspects of a strong hierarchical separation between the researcher and the interviewee (Beech, MacIntosh, and MacLean 2010).

In terms of the sincerity and transparency of interviewees, another factor that was beneficial to the depth, richness and weight of the collected data pertained to the fact that at the time of the interview, some of the elite informants were not employed, but had recently retired or were in between jobs. This feature was highly beneficial as it placed them in a position to speak more freely and provide information that they would have normally not been keen to share. Before an interview the former CEO of a global aerospace company underlined:

> I don't represent […] but my own personal views and I think this is important for you because I can speak my mind and don't have

> to be politically correct, or adhere to company communications (Interview 17, firm).

Oral history literature (Perks and Thomson 2003) provides some crucial notions that have to be carefully considered when interviewing. Whilst acknowledging that there aren't fixed rules, and that these features should be considered for any interview, it is important to consider aspects such as "the value of preparation, the importance of establishing a rapport and intimacy, of listening and of asking open-ended questions, not interrupting, allowing for pauses and silences, avoiding jargon, probing, minimizing the presence of the tape recorder and so on" (Perks and Thomson 2003: 101).

In line with the explorative nature of the research design and to contrast potential pitfalls of interviewing elites, the interview guide was developed adopting open-ended questions. As Aberbach and Rockman (2002: 674) argue, "elites especially – but other highly educated people as well – do not like being put in the straightjacket of close-ended questions. They prefer to articulate their views, explaining why they think what they think".

However, elite interviews also present some limitations and drawbacks. Many of the interviewed top managers had very busy schedules and were subject to sudden and unexpected changes to their agendas. For instance, during one of the interviews, the informant received a call regarding the visit of a foreign Ambassador, and therefore, had to suspend the interview. Even though the interview was not scheduled to last much longer, this had a negative impact on this specific data collection episode and on the capacity to finish the interview in the desired manner.

4.4.5 Documentary sources and archival data

Documentary sources are an extremely significant piece of data for case studies and "are used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin 1994: 81) and verify the validity of information gained through interviews (Lilleker 2003). De Massis and Kotlar (2014: 21) propose several strengths of documentation and argue that it "is a stable, unobtrusive and exact source of data". This is echoed by Yin (1994) who underlines that documents are advantageous as they are unobtrusive, can be examined repeatedly and allow an extensive analysis in terms of time, actions and contexts.

The documentation that was taken into consideration is diverse. It was collected from different sources and provided diverse information (see Table 8). As aforementioned, coherently with the research design and the iterative nature of this study, documents were collected throughout the different stages of the research. Several interviewees were instrumental in directing the researcher towards documents that provided additional evidence. These characteristics are intended to increase the evidence from supplementary sources and to corroborate the findings. Hence, the collection and analysis of the documentary data was highly beneficial to the triangulating process and limited the weaknesses of the semi-structured interviews (Punch 1998).

Thus, different documents have been collected from institutional, company as well as trade and business associations' sources. Institutional documents such as: House of Commons and House of Lords papers, reports and publications, green and white papers, meetings minutes, House of Commons Library reports, Select Committee hearing reports, EU publications such as the Official Journal of the European Union, European Parliament law and reports, European Commission papers and reports, and EU press releases. Furthermore, documents included company and trade association press releases, annual reports, external relations reports, marketing campaigns and materials, government affairs reports, as well as business, consultancy, international organisations and NGO reports. These documents have been retrieved directly through company and institutional websites, on site, university, national and local government, and EU databases as well as through archives. The UK Parliamentary archives, the National Archives, as well as the archives of the National Aerospace Library are examples of the latter. Finally, data from media outlets was monitored, analysed and included if pertinent.

Table 8: Overview of documentary sources

Source	Document	Description of use in the analysis	Number
Firm	Lobbying policy reports, external relations reports, annual reports.	Provided information on firms' external relations and government affairs and strategies, as well as information on key stakeholders (public and private).	**5**
Trade Association	Policy objectives, public statements, industry surveys, industry reports, blogs	Provided industry data. Company responses to surveys. Policy aims and objectives. Government and select committee consultation	**26**

	and newsletters, trade association archives, websites.	reports. Documents also provided an overview of the key stakeholders and their relationships.	
UK political institutions (including local and national government and government departments, House of Commons, House of Lords, Parliament Library)	Government publications, consultations, Select Committee hearings reports and online videos, meeting minutes, minutes of evidence, letters and correspondence, parliamentary reports and briefings, departmental reports.	Provided in-depth and rich data on the interactions between government and government departments with firms and trade associations. Moreover, these documents emphasised the importance of the aerospace industry in the UK.	**37**
Other organisations (Business-government partnerships, consultancies, international organisations, NGOs, learned societies, think tanks, research institutions)	Aerospace sector outlook, overview of the aerospace sector, top companies reports, lobbying reports.	Provided a key source of information for understanding the structure and workings of the aerospace sector as well as definitions and information on how lobbying and interest representation activities are conducted in various countries.	**28**
European Institutions	Transparency register, industry reports.	Provided rich data on lobbying and on the aerospace industry in the EU.	**8**
Media outlets	Newspaper articles, websites.	These were instrumental in gaining information on public political strategies (i.e. how trade associations use media outlets to convey their messages to a wider audience).	**12**
Total			**116**

Source: Elaborated by author

The data gathered through documents was mainly utilised in three ways. The first was to develop a deep understanding of the context, actors and relationships pertaining to the aerospace industry in the UK. This data was utilised to describe the sector and to develop the contextual chapter. The second, which is closely related to the previous relates to understanding the historical context of the phenomena as to consider its historical development. The third way in which the data was utilised was to triangulate and verify the information gleaned from the semi-structured interviews. Hence, the data was used at

the beginning of the research to understand the actors as well as the industry and political environments, and in the later stages of the study to substantiate the information gained from the interviews.

The documentary data served to build an exhaustive database of national and regional trade associations in the UK aerospace sector, which was developed by systematically scrutinising all trade associations' and firms' websites and reports. The database encompassed the various trade associations, information on their governance structure, their geographical location, a brief description of their aim, operations and services. The latter aspects are particularly insightful towards understanding their stated objectives and functions, as well as the weight given to political functions in relation to their overall activities. Moreover, the database included the largest companies operating in the UK, which was conducive towards highlighting that firms join several trade associations concurrently.

As with the other methods utilised within the research, it is vital to reflect on the validity of the information gained from these documents. It was necessary to scrutinise the collected data in terms of its content and authenticity (Scott 2014), as well as in terms of any underlying reason for the publication of such a document to assess its representativeness and contribution to the research (Bryman 2004). Robson (1993) argues that documents developed by private organisations are inclined to present positive features of a sector, whereas institutional documents may represent a specific political agenda. Furthermore, it was imperative to "understand the provenance of sources, to read them against the grain, and consider them in the context in which they were produced" (Perchard et al. 2017: 19).

Finally, as highlighted by scholars such as MacLean, Harvey, and Clegg it is important, when collecting and analysing documentary sources, to acknowledge "organisational failures" (2016: 35), as organisations may deliberately decide to include or exclude information in official documentation. This is an additional feature that underlines the importance of triangulation not just in relation to oral testimony but also company publications.

4.4.6 Observations

Observations are a data collection method commonly utilised in ethnographic studies, which can be implemented in both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015). Nevertheless, it has been a crucial technique to gather data, information and key insights on the actors, roles, procedures, and relationships in the UK aerospace industry that would have been impossible to collect in a different way. Myers (2013: 92) states that observations provide "rich insights into the human, social and organisational aspects of business organizations".

There are different typologies and activities that can be employed whilst making observations. Yin (2014) differentiates observations between formal and casual data collection activities. Similarly, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015: 86) highlight that observations can be divided in participant observation and non-participant observation. The first relates to a deep involvement and active participation in the studied context (i.e. working for a firm, which is at the same time the context of the study), whereas the second refers to activities that limit the researcher to an outside observer. The latter typology was adopted within this study.

Nevertheless, acknowledging that a thorough and systematic collection of data through direct observations requires researchers to spend a protracted period of time within the research setting, it would be unwise not to mention the valuable information gained with this particular method. These non-participant observations helped to inform the interviews and direct the collection of documentary sources. Additionally, this method increased the validity of the study as it enabled the researcher to present a true picture of the phenomena (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2012). Consistent with the research philosophy adopted for this study, these insights clearly informed the understanding and interpretation of the topic.

As with any data collection method, researchers should consider the limitations linked to particular methods adopted within a study. In relation to observations there are several limitations such as the low degree of reliability, and low degree of representativeness (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2012). In terms of the latter the objective of the observations was not to generalise, rather to acquire insights into the activities and relationships within the aerospace industry. Another limitation, which is frequently

associated to observations, relates to the time and financial resources required. This concern was curbed by the fact that the researcher would already be attending several events to establish relationships and find potential participants.

During the course of the PhD, the researcher attended several industry conferences, events, fairs where it was possible to observe how and where firms and trade associations relate with government and political institutions. Examples of these events are the Aerodays 2015 conference in London, the 2016 Farnborough Air show, the Advanced Engineering 2016 fair, as well as several seminars, meetings, conferences and events organised by the Royal Aeronautical Society, the Italian Chamber of Commerce in the UK, the Italian Embassy in the UK, and by think tanks and other organisations.

These events have been a key source of information for understanding the key relationships, roles and activities in a way that is not readily understandable solely by secondary documents and by information gained through interviews. Moreover, observations allowed an immersion in the research, in order to appreciate the activities in a real-life context as they were unfolding, rather than in an artificial setting such as during formal interviews. Verschuren (2003: 131) argues that each method of data collection "reveals its own aspects and parts of social reality". Hence, whilst other methods of data collection such as interviews may be beneficial in understanding the motives of a particular behaviour, observations are conducive towards revealing the actual behaviour.

Taking extensive and detailed field notes was critical towards an accurate documentation of the observations (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). These were subsequently transcribed in a word processor for several reasons. Firstly, to gather all the data in one place, i.e. in the case study database. Secondly, to be "prepared" in a correct format that would aid the analysis. Finally, to make this information as accessible and manageable as possible, for it to be readily retrievable when required.

Dubois and Gadde (2002) argue that researchers are able to collect two very distinct typologies of data: passive and active data. The first relates to the data that the researcher is looking for and intends to find. The latter refers to data that is associated with discovery, hence, data that would not have been found through active search. For example, the researcher was fortunate to attend a board of directors meeting at the Italian Chamber of Commerce in the UK in London, which was key in understanding the dynamics that

govern the relationships and power-relationships of firms within the context of an association. The insights gleaned from this event clearly informed the researcher's knowledge on trade association activity and consequently assisted the development of new questions that contributed to the improvement of the interview guide. Dubois and Gadde (2002: 557) stress that, "a very active interviewer will come across passive data only. On the other hand, active data will require a more passive (less predetermined) researcher". Here again the flexibility of the research design and of the case studies was beneficial to assimilate unanticipated information (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015).

4.5 Data analysis process and data structure

The key function of data analysis is to comprehend and obtain insights from the collected information (Ghauri and Grønhaug 2005). In relation to qualitative analysis, the data is interpreted to gain a broader understanding and progress empirical knowledge (Corbin and Strauss 2008). In order to achieve these objectives and understand the multiple intricacies that constitute the research problem, it is necessary to "transform and interpret the qualitative data" with academic rigour (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 3). Pratt (2009) argues that there is not a standard model to analyse qualitative data. Hence, it is important to develop a specific approach that takes into consideration the peculiarities of the researched context and subsequently support and justify the utilised techniques.

In qualitative studies the data analysis and the data collection frequently overlap (Baxter and Jack 2008; Sarantakos 2005). As abovementioned (Section 4.4.1) and coherently with the overall research approach, each individual phase is not developed subsequently but the process is rather simultaneous. A clear example is that during the data collection phase, themes and codes start to be developed. As the researcher gains empirical data, it is key to start formulating inferences and use the data. Hence, a key feature of this analysis is its iterative nature in linking the data to existing theory (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015). Dubois and Gadde (2002) argue that data analysis should not be considered as a stand-alone stage of research. It should rather be considered as "going 'back and forth' from one type of research activity to another, and between empirical observations and theory" (Dubois and Gadde 2002: 555). In this way, researchers are able to expand their understanding of both theory and the empirical phenomena. Thus, the several iterations of the coding process, as well as the constant review of the literature and documentary

data assisted to progressively move from an empirical level to a higher level of abstraction (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012). Yin (2014) warns that delaying the analysis of the data may lead to gaining a great wealth of data and eventually not utilising it, which in turn, can lead to delays in the data analysis phase.

In this study, interviews are the main source of primary data, and Kvale (1996) defines three levels of analysis: firstly, interviews must be transcribed. Secondly, they must be analysed. Finally, they must be verified. In comparison, Huberman and Miles (2002) categorise data analysis in: data reduction, display, conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis is undertaken in conjunction with the content analysis of documents and secondary data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). In order to engage in data reduction, the collected information should be edited, sorted and summarised. Simultaneously, the data should be coded which implies a procedure of categorisation with the intent of identifying common themes, ideas, insights, concepts and patterns. Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2011: 217) state that coding has two main purposes: firstly, to "identify a range of issues raised in the data, and understand the meanings attached to these issues by participants". Secondly, codes are useful labels or keywords that can assist in storing and labelling the data so that it can be easily retrieved. Corbin and Strauss (2014: 159) indicate that coding implicates that notions, views and perceptions are extracted, and that there is an interaction with the data. The next stages, display and conclusion drawing, relate to methods that assist to display the data in order to be able to present it, as well as advance observations and concepts from it.

The first approach to analysing the interview data was undertaken immediately after the first interviews took place. During the transcription of the recorded interviews, comments were noted down on emerging thoughts, themes, ideas, conceptual patterns, as well as on possible links to existing literature. This information informed the development of new questions that were included in the interview guide for subsequent interviews. Moreover, undertaking a preliminary analysis whilst compiling the transcripts, rather than after the process was completed, was particularly beneficial in terms of the fresh recollection of interviewees' emotions and actions during the interview, which benefitted the richness of the data. These features could easily be lost when reading the transcript several weeks or months after the interview took place. This can be considered as an advantage of personally transcribing the interviews as opposed to outsourcing this process to an

external party. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015: 144) argue that "the joint process of transcription, coding and analysis offers an extraordinary opportunity to become sensitized to the full richness of your data" and that "the very slowness of the process somehow contributes to the theoretical depth which is possible to achieve".

An additional feature that should be considered when analysing interview data is that researchers should keep in mind that informants may not reveal all the necessary information. It is hence necessary to maintain a high level of sensitivity towards what informants avoid sharing (Gillham 2000), as this may be key towards gaining a real understanding of the studied phenomena.

NVivo 11 was used to facilitate the collection, analysis, manageability and trustworthiness of the data (Corley and Gioia 2004). The software was beneficial in terms of meticulously storing, sorting, coding and retrieving the data when required, as well as enhancing the transparency of the analysis (Morse and Richards 2002). One of the main criticisms regarding the use of NVivo or similar computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is that there is the risk of decontextualizing data (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016). Given that one of the key features of this research is the paramount importance of the research context and the environment in which trade associations operate, it was necessary to maintain a close awareness to the origin (i.e. who said what, and in which context) of each individual fragment of data.

Similarly, to the grounded-theory approach (Bryman and Bell 2007), the main phase of the data analysis consisted of several coding steps (Dacin, Munir, and Tracey 2010; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016), which ensured a consistent, rigorous and systematic approach to the analysis. Grounded theory is considered as the most widely used framework for analysing qualitative data (Bryman and Bell 2007: 584). Since Glaser and Strauss' (1976) seminal work, grounded theory has gained a variety of different connotations, and can refer to a methodological approach, a method of inquiry and the result of a research process. The first, relates to a research strategy. The second relates to a technique of collecting and analysing data, the third refers to theory that emerges inductively from the data (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016). In its original form, the grounded theory approach had the prerequisite that research should be conducted without previous theoretical knowledge. Several scholars

(e.g. Charmaz 2000; Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015) have underlined that this is very seldom the case and most commonly, the approach refers to theory that has emerged from the data (Bryman and Bell 2007).

Even though this research does not specifically embrace a grounded theory approach, the adoption of a grounded-theory derived logic to the analysis is beneficial, as it does not confine this research to existing theoretical models primarily developed for different contexts. Rather, it allows for a greater sensitivity to the specific research context and enables to extend and refine theories that reveal the peculiarities of the processes and mechanisms of political activities. It also enables to accentuate informants' perspectives on the studied activities and processes, which is another key feature and strength of this research. Besides, dissimilarly to the "pure" grounded theory approach, the analysis was informed by existing literature (Eisenhardt 1989). Moreover, the data-driven approach is coherent with the case study strategy of working the data from the 'ground up' (Yin 2014), as well as with existing research in the fields of business-government relations and corporate political activity (e.g. Lawton, Rajwani, and Doh 2013). However, in juxtaposition to Yin's (2014) approach in relation to the development of case studies, Eisenhardt (1989) whose work was inspired by the grounded theory approach (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015) contends that the formulation of propositions can hinder the exploration of the phenomena.

In the first stage of the coding process, the interview transcripts were printed and read several times. Initial comments and concepts were written on the margins of the transcripts. Subsequently, the transcripts were entered in NVivo and coded systematically. This initial coding stage may be referred to as 'open coding' (Bryman 2016; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016). The surfacing labels were not predetermined or standardized (Charmaz 2000); rather they emerged from the data itself and often composed of 'in-vivo words'. These labels contained words, sentences and accounts on the role and activities of trade associations, as well as their relationships with other organisations, intermediaries and political institutions. This process produced over 150 codes.

A key feature of the preliminary coding stage, which nevertheless was also adopted in the ensuing stages, is that of constant comparison (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016),

which entails comparing each new data fragment to other passages that have already been coded. It ensures consistency and facilitates the process of analysis. Moreover, the codes were analysed and compared with the interview transcripts to ensure their consistency and accuracy with the raw data, and that they reflected the views, perceptions and notions as underlined by the participants. In this stage, several codes that described the same phenomenon were aggregated with other codes. When possible and useful to the analysis, the preliminary codes were also renamed in order to link them with existing concepts and notions in the corporate political activity literature. Several idiosyncratic codes that were not particularly relevant or recurring throughout the interviews were dropped. This is consistent with the abductive approach undertaken within this research as codes are initially developed inductively, however they are then compared with existing ones. This technique ensures the correct interpretation of the data as well as a greater level of analytical coding (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016).

The second stage consisted in elaborating and grouping similar codes (Bryman and Bell 2007) into higher-order categories and connecting these categories. Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012) compare this process to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) axial coding. The key aspect of this stage is to find similarities and differences amongst the different categories. This stage reduced the number of categories consistently and produced first order categories, which had to be meaningful in relation to the data and in relation to the other categories. During this phase, the categories were complemented and refined through the triangulation of information gained from other data collection methods (e.g. observations, trade association and firm reports, institutional publications, and archival data).

In the management domain, there are different approaches towards utilising different sets of data whilst developing the data structure, which demonstrates the flexibility of such an approach[38]. On one side scholars (e.g. Ravasi and Philips 2011) make an extensive use of documentary data and include it in the coding process, whereas other scholars (e.g. Dacin, Munir, and Tracey 2010) develop the data structure using primarily the interview data and then complement it with documentary information. This study is closer to the latter

[38] Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012: 26) argue that this approach should not be considered as a "cookbook" but rather in a flexible manner and "open to innovation". Treating it as a structured guide would only limit its "innovative possibilities".

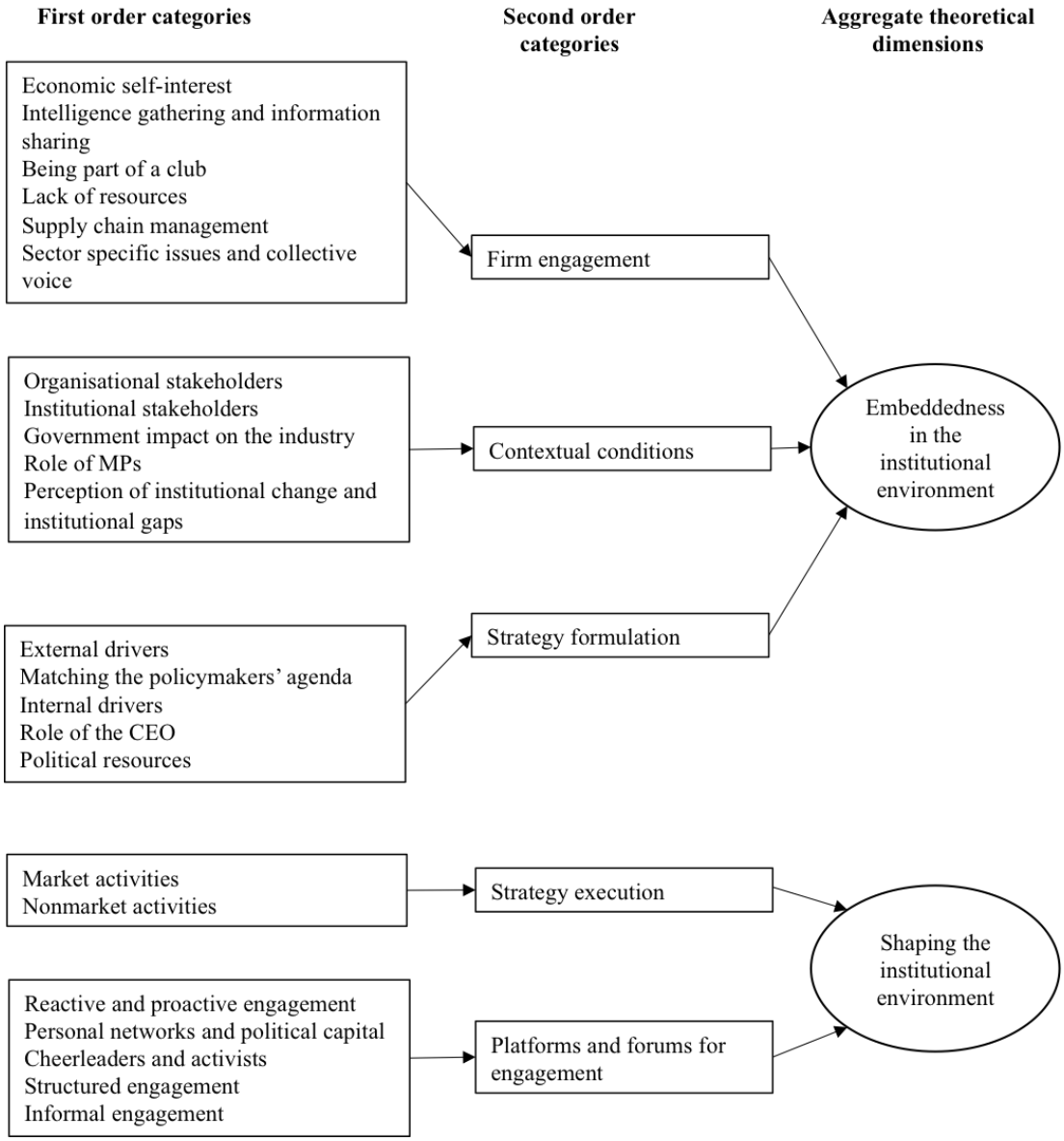
approach and thus the documentary data informed the interview data. This feature is consistent with the case study research strategy as one of the main pitfalls is that during the data analysis phase each source of data is treated independently (Yin 2014). Rather, the various sources of data should be converged in order to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomena.

The third stage of the analysis consisted in finding connections among the first-order categories and grouping them in second-order categories. This procedure was not linear, rather it involved going back and forth from the emerging patterns and the first-order categories until adequate conceptual themes emerged (Eisenhardt 1989).

The fourth stage consisted in linking the second-order categories into aggregate theoretical dimensions. This last stage is completely positioned in the theoretical realm and is necessary to question the emerging themes for concepts that help to explain the studied phenomena. The theory is thus allowed to emerge from these relationships and connections between themes. This stage can also be referred to as selective or focused coding, where core categories are selected and analytically associated to the other categories (Bryman and Bell 2007; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016: 185) echo this approach and highlight how researchers will identify themes and patterns and will place them in extant literature "in order to refine, extend or generate theory".

The outcome of the four stages that were undertaken and revised several times was the development of the data structure (Figure 7), offering a visual depiction of how the analysis evolved from raw segments of data to aggregate theoretical dimensions (e.g. Pratt 2008; Tracy 2010). Whilst the previous paragraphs have underlined in detail the process and various stages of the analysis, Chapter 5 will elaborate this data structure and provide the evidence behind the development of this visual conceptualisation of the analysis.

Figure 7: Final data structure



Source: Elaborated by author

Several measures were implemented to strengthen the analysis of the data and ensure the robustness, reliability and validity of the emergent themes and patterns. First, was the adoption of detailed notes or memos. Memos can be considered as a systematic approach to note and record insights, ideas and theoretical questions (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015: 164). This is another element that was 'borrowed' from grounded theory approaches (Bryman and Bell 2007), which has been useful to maintain a clear and transparent track of emerging ideas and patterns. Second, several key informants were contacted during the analysis to discuss the interpretation of the data and soundness of

the analytical findings. Finally, the researcher engaged in peer debriefing (e.g. Ravasi and Philips 2011), which consisted in discussing nascent analytical patterns and findings with researchers not involved in the study to canvass critical questions and gain an outsider's viewpoint. Hence, the researcher engaged in several discussions with peer scholars, other researchers as well as scholars with specific expertise in the area of political activities and trade association research.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive description of the methodological approach, including an outline of the research design and research strategy. The choice of adopting a case study approach using qualitative methods is given by theoretical and practical considerations, and a key aspect that should be highlighted is the iterative process that is distinctive of the qualitative approach. Subsequently, the chapter engaged in a detailed discussion on the different data sources that were collected and how they were analysed. The following chapter will build on the analysis of the data to explore the role of trade associations and their political activities.

Chapter 5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter builds on the literature review, methodology and contextual information presented in the preceding chapters to provide a thorough account of the findings that emerged from the collected data.

The findings indicate that trade associations are embedded within their institutional environment (Granovetter 1985), which mainly emerges thorough the influence of environmental conditions, the strong relationships with other organisational actors - both internal, i.e. member firms, and external other organisations - as well as the apparent convergence to policy and decision makers' expectations (Getz 2001). Moreover, findings suggest that trade associations undertake a breadth of proactive political activities to exert greater influence and shape their environment. The key findings are summarised and presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Summary of key findings

Key findings
This study adds to the debate on why firms decide to undertake political activities collectively. It goes beyond the individual vs collective approach, and underlines complementarity between the two approaches.
Even though cross-sector organizations dominate the intermediary environment, in terms of size of their membership, resources, and ability to represent broader domains, the importance of sectorial trade associations emerge thanks to their expertise and knowledge of the industry, as well as a result of a closer proximity to SMEs and mid-sized enterprises.
This study illustrates the significant influence of the political and policy framework in the UK on trade associations' role (e.g. dominant role of executive, sub-national political governance bodies, dynamic nature of political institutions).
Trade associations' political activity development is influenced by external (e.g. matching government agenda) and internal factors (e.g. role of large firms and trade associations' top management).
Trade associations' political activities are characterized by informational and relational strategies and by the combination of proactive and reactive approaches.
Trade associations undertake collaborative rather than confrontational interaction with policymakers, as this approach is necessary to gain institutional legitimacy.
The deployment of internal and external resources (i.e. member firms) is used to proactively influence the institutional environment (i.e. organisational, relational, and reputational).
This study extends the notion that firms build an institutional field to influence government (Barley 2010) to trade associations.

Source: Author's compilation.

Figure 8 proposes a visual representation of the findings that will be discussed in the following sections and is used to structure this chapter. Section 5.2 will cover the two oval boxes on the left (i.e. Political role and Political strategy formulation), and address the first two research questions:

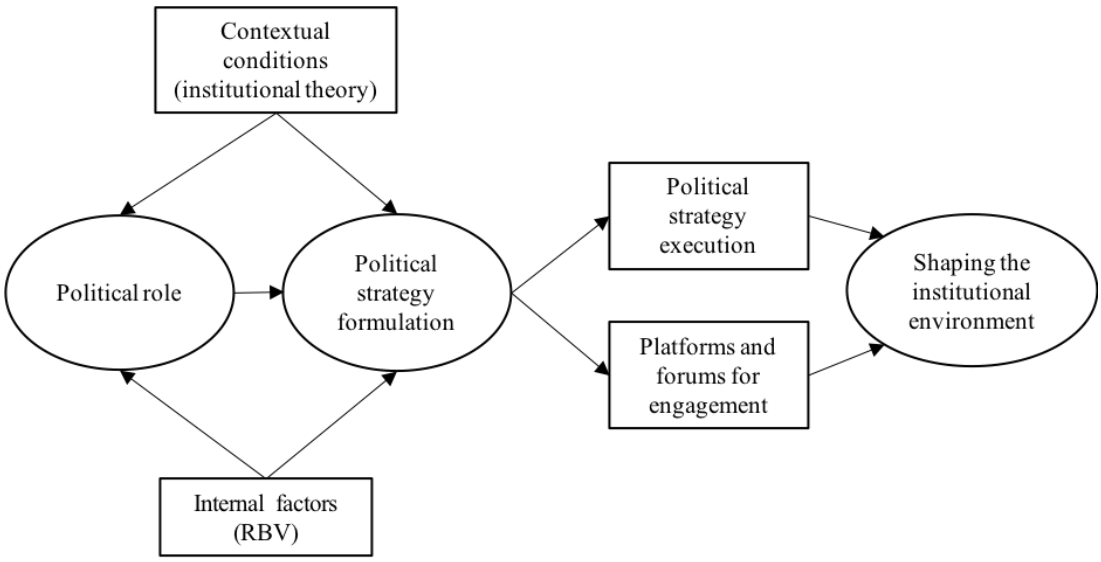
- **RQ1: What are the determinants of trade associations' political role?**
- **RQ2: How is political strategy defined and exercised in trade associations?**

Whereas section 5.3 will cover the oval box on the right (i.e. Shaping the institutional environment), delve into the political activities that trade associations develop and undertake, and address the third research question:

- **RQ3: How do trade associations exert their influence?**

The findings challenge the assumption that theoretical perspectives commonly utilised within the CPA and NMS literatures can be applied in isolation to elucidate trade associations' role and activities. The findings rather draw attention to the complementarity between institutional perspectives and resource-based views, as these are both required to understand trade associations' political role as well as how these organisations define and execute their political strategy.

Figure 8: Visual representation of the findings



Source: Elaborated by author

In line with recommendations in presenting qualitative research (Pratt 2009), and to emphasize the richness of the collected data, as well as to justify the interpretations and maintain a close connection between context, data and emerging concepts, the following chapter will be suffused with interview quotes. This approach is beneficial towards demonstrating qualitative rigour of the analysis and presentation of the findings (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012). Moreover, Appendix 2 provides selected excerpts to support the researcher's interpretations.

Furthermore, this chapter will present a detailed narrative of the interpretations coupled with theoretical reflections that will enhance the articulation of the findings (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Ravasi and Philips 2011). Together, these findings are conducive towards the overarching aim of this research, which is to explore the role and functions of sectoral trade associations in the context of business-government relations in the UK aerospace industry.

5.2 Recognising trade associations' embeddedness in the institutional environment

In seeking to address the questions concerning sectoral trade associations' role in the business-government interaction and how they define their political strategy, it is necessary to investigate the environment in which these organisations operate. It is hence necessary to examine how trade associations' managers view trade associations and how firms' managers who regularly interact with these bodies view them in relation to the broad range of intermediary organisations operating at the interface of industry and the political institutional environment. Coherently with the definitions of trade associations adopted within this study[39], the environment in which these organisations operate comprises internal (i.e. the relationships between trade associations and their members) and external (i.e. the relationships with other intermediaries, as well as with economic and socio-political actors) factors that have to be analysed in order to fully understand

[39] As mentioned in Chapter 2, the main definition on trade associations used within this study relates to Aldrich and Staber (1988: 111) who define trade associations as "organizations created to represent business interests within specific domains, mobilizing firms within their domain so that collective action can be taken on common problems". Moreover, another characteristic that is helpful towards understanding the focus is proposed by Ahrne and Brunsson (2005) who consider trade associations as 'meta-organisations' whereby the members of the organisation are other organisations rather than individuals.

their specific role and function. Hence, the following sections explain why firms engage with trade associations at both national and regional level, contributing to their development and survival, how managers who are involved in the development of political strategy perceive the institutional environment and the relationships with key stakeholders that populate it. Finally, it examines how political strategy is defined within trade associations and key factors that influence its development, as these have gained limited attention within extant literature, and it has been recently indicated as an avenue that could benefit from further investigations (Barnett 2017).

5.2.1 Firm engagement

One of the key themes that emerged during the analysis of the data relates to the reasons and motivations behind firms' participation in collective action and engagement with trade associations. This is a concern that several scholars have investigated (e.g. Bennett 1999; 2000; Tucker 2008; Schuler, Rehbein, and Cramer 2002), and the findings of this research contribute to the limited understanding of what drives firms to join these organisations, consigning them a key role in the business-government interaction. Moreover, an acknowledgement of why firms join will help to understand trade associations' functions (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017). Coherently with the structure of the interviews, which were designed to allow participants from different professional backgrounds to answer questions in an-open manner and provide in-depth and rich accounts, the results underline different perspectives, highlighting subtle complexities that could only be grasped with the adoption of such a qualitative approach. There are a wide variety of drivers that impact the decision to join trade associations, however, the underlying notion is that for certain business actors, trade associations can be considered as crucially important and effective organisations, whereas for other organisations they are merely a means to maintain relationships, whilst real business is done elsewhere.

Barnett's (2017) broad classifications (i.e. economic self-interest, sociological identity, and meta-organisational management) are widely recognisable within the interviewees' responses, especially aspects concerning economic self-interest and sociological identity. Nevertheless, the predominant perspective that emerged, irrespective of the interlocutor, i.e. firm or trade association representative, relates to the striking differences given by the

size of member firms. Namely, the notion that smaller firms tend to join and operate through trade associations because of a lack of resources:

> For the smaller companies, you don't have the resources…so it's actually very useful to have the trade association to push them, to represent the SMEs because without them you don't have the resources to affect government policy (Interview 16, trade association).

Hence, this deficiency of resources results in extremely limited if not completely absent opportunities to influence the policy-making process (Taminiau and Wilts 2006), and trade associations represent an effective alternative to operate in the political arena as evidenced by the former CEO of a large prime:

> The benefit for SMEs being involved in trade associations is because it gives them a bigger voice and again it's around the alignment of goals and I think also that there is an opportunity for SMEs that are proactive, to actually get involved and shape the agenda (Interview 17, firm).

The deficiencies are mainly due to organisational, financial and human resource constraints, and the inability to establish internal government and public affairs departments or pay for external political consultants. The notions that large firms are able to operate individually and will have larger discretion towards joining regional and national trade associations were emphasised and validated by informants across the different backgrounds. The CEO of a regional trade association mentioned that:

> It is also important to recognise that at the regional level they [large companies] have the size and influence within regional government to ask for what they want themselves. They don't need the [trade association] to do that on their behalf (Interview 15, trade association).

This research extends seminal, yet still up-to-date work on political activities (Hillman and Hitt 1999) in that large firms, particularly the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) and Tier1 suppliers[40], have the capacity to interact with the national government directly as well, as the senior VP of a large prime operating in the sector underlined that:

> Intermediaries are important but not fundamental as we have a direct interaction with the government (Interview 8, firm).

[40] Airbus and Boeing are examples of OEMs, whilst Rolls Royce is an example of a Tier1 supplier.

Hence, large firms will be generally able to choose when to act independently and when collaboratively, and will consider trade associations as a limited source of benefits and as complementary to their own government affairs departments (Reveley and Ville 2010). Several firm informants presented an extreme view highlighting negative consequences of an external organisations' involvement and how an indirect approach with political stakeholders could dilute the effect of the message they are trying to convey:

> I think that by doing everything through a trade association it's like putting a light through a spectrum […] it's not quite the direct thing. So it's not the same thing, it could be complementary to have a trade body putting these messages but we would want to have some confidence…sometimes if something is very crucial to us that we convey that ourselves. So I would see a trade body always as complementary to what we are doing (Interview 23, firm).

Another aspect associated to resource availability concerns the physical distance from policymakers, as larger firms will potentially have the capacity to establish offices in the proximity of key institutional arenas in order to interact with policymakers regularly. Figure 9 maps the headquarters or government affairs offices of large companies in central London and underlines the proximity to Whitehall (i.e. government) and Westminster (i.e. parliament). This aspect is particularly relevant to trade associations as well, and as will be highlighted in the following sections, the capacity to constantly - and when required promptly - relate with key institutional actors is a decisive capability in developing and undertaking efficient political activities (Hillman and Hitt 1999).

Moreover, trade associations will be extremely important for firms (particularly smaller firms) towards compensating the scarcity of resources aimed at the business environment, for example in terms of helping firms market their products. Trade associations will usually set up stands at local, national as well as international events and fairs, which may support smaller firms establish a presence in additional markets and develop relationships with foreign trade bodies by opening business channels and international business platforms (Interview 18, trade association). As described by an informant whose business is member of several associations:

> They could have money saving deals to allow a collective group of businesses in the supply chain go and investigate a new market and they might help that, or they may pull together the

> opportunities to go to an exhibition or a trade exhibition where you can go under the umbrella of that organisation and…you don't have to put the big thing on yourself, it is covered by that trade association (Interview 14, industry expert).

Figure 9: London headquarters and/or government affairs offices of leading aerospace companies[41]

Source: Elaborated by author

Nonetheless, regardless the opportunity to operate independently or not, large and small firms will tend to join several associations at the same time. According to a survey undertaken by a regional trade association, 70% of their members, which span from micro SMEs (less than 10 employees or £2m turnover) to larger firms (more than 250 employees or £50m turnover), answered that they are part of several associations[42] (Strategic

[41] Some of these companies are manufacturing/engineering companies with aerospace divisions. They are included in the map as informants consider them as competitors to aerospace companies in the political arena. Moreover, if the relationship with trade associations is considered, which is the focus of this study, these companies certainly play a role in the definition of trade associations' political strategy.

[42] Membership of other associations included other sector specific associations both at national and regional level, as well as of associations operating in other sectors.

Marketing 2013). This is in line with extant studies (e.g. Bennett 1998; Bennett and Ramsden 2007; Perry 2012) that underline how firms join various kinds of associations to meet their different needs. Moreover, as underlined by Perry (2012: 23) trade associations operating in industries characterised by the presence of a limited number of large companies, will seek to preserve large firms' membership, as the lack of such companies may weaken the organisation.

In terms of economic self-interest, which is linked to the notion of communal strategy (Barnett 2006a), firms recognise that their position is endangered by industry effects and thus shift their focus towards the industry, which is considered as a determinant of firm performance. This is conceptually opposed to the classical view of competitive strategy where a firm's position is endangered by competitive forces, and thus firms direct their attention towards rival firms within the same industry (Barnett 2017). The shift between these two strategies will determine where firms direct their resources. In several cases, there is thus, a clear strategic vision to join trade associations and firms may foresee direct benefits from paying membership fees and engaging with their competitors on collaborative activities. As the CEO of a regional trade association put forward:

> Lots of organisations see the benefit of being part, certainly of the national trade associations, simply by trying to influence the national strategy, by having a sector coming forward to represent the whole industry, rather than individual companies doing that and potentially giving different messages (Interview 15, trade association).

Various interviewees stressed the sole economic and operational benefits excluding sociological identity or other factors from their motivations to join associations. Hence, in line with extant studies (e.g. Tucker 2008) these findings confirm that economic incentives are an important determinant, as highlighted by a trade association representative:

> That is why people pay their subscriptions to [trade association] it's because they think there will be some commercial benefit from being a member (Interview 19, trade association).

Several informants, particularly the managing directors and CEOs of the various trade associations, acknowledged this feature and highlighted this economic and commercial reason:

> […] one of the prime drivers is to gain greater exposure and to win more business, it's as simple as that (Interview 24, trade association).

Hence, in this case, the collective organisations are not considered as catalysers of aggregation within a specific industry, and firms do not join them because they identify with their community (Spillman 2012). Rather, firms consider trade associations as mere tools and platforms, which can be used towards individual gains.

Another reason that motivates firms to engage with trade associations, which can be considered as a subset of economic self-interest, relates to the opportunity that firms have to gather intelligence and information from the trade associations they are members of. Informants confirmed notions underlined in extant work (e.g. Barron, Hultén, and Vanyushyn 2015; Lawton, Doh, and Rajwani 2014) that firms gain knowledge and expertise when joining trade associations:

> Sometimes its intelligence gathering […] so by participating in that form you get to learn what other companies, potential competitors are asking for, what are they pushing for, and in some ways, it is intelligence gathering that you can't get in any other form if you are not part of that association (Interview 19, trade association).

Hence, these organisations are incredible sources of market and nonmarket intelligence as well as specialised knowledge, and firms are thus able to gain information that they would not otherwise be able to obtain (Dalziel 2006) and address information asymmetry (Greenwood 2002). Knowledge can be gained from the association itself or from other members within the organisation (Battisti and Perry 2015). In relation to market information, trade associations are particularly well placed to offer internal and external knowledge. In terms of the first, intelligence may relate to industry competitors, or for smaller firms, to business opportunities stemming from larger firms (Interview 24, trade association). In terms of the latter, the analysed trade associations demonstrate evident capabilities in conducting market and business research and providing firms with national and international market intelligence, as was confirmed by several informants from the firms' side:

> I see a trade association as being a resource, somewhere I can go to find out where business might be for me or for something like

> trying to move into an export regime, they might have country information for me, from my sector perspective […] so they are for me sort of a marketing vehicle and a resource of information (Interview 17, firm).

In terms of nonmarket information, trade associations, particularly the more active in the political arena demonstrated a breadth of information regarding the government's agenda, new policy developments, as well as knowledge on key political actors at parliamentary level and within the civil service (Interview 18, trade association). Intelligence on political matters is crucial to large and small firms alike, and even though large firms may be able to interact independently there are cases when they will be able to gain key information only through trade association channels. The Head of Public Affairs of a large prime stated:

> So sometimes the trade bodies make us aware of issues that we are concerned about. So, for example at the moment, [the trade association] is having regular meetings with the Secretary of State on Brexit, and the Secretary of State says I want to meet the sector. I don't just want to meet [a company] (Interview 23, firm).

The findings regarding trade associations as key sources of political intelligence, build on Hultén, Barron, and Bryson's (2012) work in which the authors argue that country-specific institutional characteristics affect firms' political activities. The scholars underline how, in contrast to their expectations, SMEs in the UK were more likely to use government fonts rather than trade associations as source of information. However, they point out that a possible explanation for this attitude may pertain to the fact that the data was gathered during the European election campaigns of 2009, a period in which political parties were highly involved in communication campaigns (Hultén, Barron, and Bryson 2012: 358). In comparison, the data gained for this research was collected during the Brexit referendum and throughout the negotiations following the result to leave the EU, which represent a period of high political and economic uncertainty and might explain the marked reliance on trade associations. Interestingly, a senior trade association representative put forward the notion that Brexit could be considered as an opportunity for associations, and intermediaries in general, as changing rules and regulations would motivate firms towards joining such organisations in order to obtain information on how to navigate this highly uncertain period (Interview 11, trade association).

The sociological identity feature is underlined in various forms, and several informants highlighted the benefits and values of being part of a group and of a community embedded within industrial borders. However, the choice to join trade associations is complex and frequently does not fit with strict categorisations, rather it is a combination of various factors. Hence, sociological identity and economic self-interest may also be interlinked and overlap. According to a trade association CEO:

> I think it is about being member of a club, and then being a member of a club accessing support, information and help, being able to network, business development, meeting customers, meeting suppliers, it is part of being part of something bigger than just running your own business (Interview 15, trade association).

An additional feature concerning the sociological identity relates to how firms are perceived by other firms, in terms of how they contribute to the development of the industry:

> For some companies it is better to be part of the community, and to be seen to be part of the community. And that they are playing their part, rather than being on their own and isolated, not part of the group (Interview 16, industry expert).

It is important to highlight that broad sociological characteristics concerning being part of a group and of a community also have consequences on the messages that a particular industry or sector is able to convey, and on how policymakers will perceive these:

> Sometimes its about being part of the collective and having all the companies in the industry speaking with one voice, it makes the view stronger and makes it carry more weight within government (Interview 16, industry expert).

This is in line with the notions proposed by Tucker (2008) on the collective reputation management activities undertaken by trade associations. Trade associations that are able to promote a cluster of companies, which is bound by shared values and common interests will be able to have greater impact or at least greater access to policy arenas. Thus, one key requirement is that the companies that cooperate are also willing to align their interests, as this will be a strong determinant of trade associations' activities effectiveness:

> You try and get a position because the more common ground you have the more…it doesn't matter how many different people say

> it but if they are all saying the same thing the person at the other end will say "this sounds important, I better listen to this". […] So, it is not in anybody's interest not to coordinate quite well with these things (Interview 19, trade association).

From the other side, governments will seek a collective voice, as this will enhance the capability to interact with the private sector. They will be able to substantiate their relationship to other members of parliament, private citizens and other stakeholders, and demonstrate that their engagement entails an entire community rather than a mere interaction with specific firms (Interview 22, firm). This is in line with the Code of Practice on written consultation published by the Cabinet Office in 2000, which welcomed broadly representative bodies, recognising the special position of trade associations (Cabinet Office 2000). This does not imply that governments will not have direct relations with specific companies, for example in terms of procurement and government contracts. Rather, this relates to the circumstance in which there is the need to relate with the entire industry, for example in terms of modifying or implementing new legislation or policy. Hence, the effectiveness and perceived effectiveness of a trade association to develop a communal identity and represent the broader community with political actors, is a strong moderating factor that will impact firms' choice to operate through it or act individually. This notion was emphasised by a senior trade association representative:

> If the trade association is seen by the big companies as effective in doing these things [political activities], they would much prefer that the lobbying is done by the trade association because they know that government doesn't like being lobbied by individual companies. It much prefers to be seen to be dealing with a whole association, a whole sector, not just an individual company. So it's a matter of effectiveness (Interview 19, trade association).

Another pattern that emerged during the analysis that entails firms' choice to join trade associations, relates to a trade associations' ability to develop the broader supply chain. Trade associations in the UK aerospace industry are attempting to improve the supply chain by developing a more homogeneous structure (Interview 12, trade association), which is intended to accelerate the competitiveness of the industry:

> Other than being positive for small firms, this will develop the supply chain, which is very positive for primes. Having an

> effective supply chain will make them want to invest more in the UK (Interview 12, trade association).

Hence, these activities are extremely relevant for larger firms, especially primes, which will have a more efficient supply chain and will be able to liaise more effectively with it. In this respect, trade associations will have a double role, on one hand they will be able to develop the supply chain, and on the other hand they will facilitate the interaction between the large primes and SMEs:

> […] so, the big companies being part of the regional alliances is very important. On our board we have senior representatives of [OEM and Tier 1 suppliers]. It is very important that they are engaged and connected with the supply chain (Interview 15, trade association).

This is seen as particularly important from the perspective of smaller firms as well, as they will be able to interact with large firm representatives; interaction that would not be available without the coordinating functions of trade associations as put forward by a trade association manager:

> We try to encourage our larger organisations to help and direct our small members by providing speakers at these events and providing us with internal information in our discussions with them. […] so that is how we use our large members and a lot of our large members joins us to do that, so if you say that [company] wants to talk to its supply chain, it's easier for them to talk to us than it is for them to talk to their entire supply chain (Interview 18, trade association).

Moreover, whilst for the majority of informants, trade associations are a means for large firms to relate and interact with their supply chain, some interviewees offered a different view that captures the notion that large primes promote the development and use the meta-organisations to actively manage their supply chain. In the following quote, the former Head of Political and Economic Affairs of a large trade association explains how the establishment and development of a regional organisation was furthered and promoted by one of the aerospace primes that had a large presence in that specific geographical area:

> […] particularly the [trade association], very strong, encouraged in part from [company] for obvious reasons, they saw it as a useful tool to liaise…to manage their supply chain (Interview 20, trade association).

Critically one of the main reasons for firms to join trade associations relates to the management of issues that transcend the boundaries of the individual firm and relate to broad industrial issues that affect the entire industry:

> When it comes to the interests of the industry, then obviously the individual companies have their own responsibilities at their own companies but there are a lot of issues which sit across the industry as a whole and often it is better to collaborate with your competitors and your partners than it is to compete around those issues (Interview 17, firm).

There are various matters that cannot be handled individually by firms regardless of their size, or whether they are capable to undertake independent activities through their own government affairs departments or external lobbyists. These include common industry wide matters, related to regulatory change, a legislative change or a policy change (Interview 16, industry expert).

Furthermore, there are specific issues that firms are purposely not willing to handle directly as these could have wider implications to their operations, reputation, credibility and image. A key implication that is particular, nevertheless not exclusive, to the aerospace industry, relates to the strong commercial and procurement links several firms enjoy with the national government. These strong relationships on one-hand benefit companies commercially, on the other hand they may limit the political activities these can undertake. In these instances, firms will thus need to operate under the auspices of trade associations. As the Head of Public Affairs of a large prime argued:

> Sometimes there are also difficult messages that we want to give, and because in many respects the government is our customer and they are buying things from us, they don't want to be told negative things by the people they are buying things off. We ask our trade bodies to sometimes give more difficult messages (Interview 23, firm).

Hence, there are several occasions when these organisations are not in the position to back particular instances, especially when issues are sensitive or politically oriented:

> You also find that the reason why they use trade bodies and they won't do things individually is particularly if they are quite

> sensitive […] they won't necessarily want to be lobbying directly (Interview 16, industry expert).

A topical example can be taken from the campaign preceding the referendum for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. In this instance, many companies were not willing to advance their views on the preferred outcome because of the negative consequences that could ensue. Airbus and Rolls Royce are examples of the few companies operating in the UK that expressed their favourable opinion towards the UK remaining a member of the European Union (Davies 2016), and after the referendum, were very outspoken about their preferred direction of the negotiations (Ruddick 2016). In sharp contrast, trade associations played a key role in presenting the industry's interests advocating against the exit of the UK from the EU (Kakkad 2015). Several firm representatives, as well as other professionals operating in the industry, highlighted how associations were instrumental in advocating on issues when they could not:

> […] associations can bring forward issues we can't, and the referendum is a clear example (Interview 5, firm).

Hence, a clear differentiation between firms' and trade associations' political activities is the ability of the latter to contribute to the political narrative in a more direct approach on particularly sensitive issues. A firm representative commented:

> We simply cannot say anything contentious […] so for instance we did not get involved in the European referendum, whereas someone like [trade association] they are able to be an effective voice of industry, because that is their role to be the voice (Interview 7, firm).

Several informants, specifically from the firms' side, referred to this feature as 'free speech', and consider trade associations as the organisation that is expected to engage with policymakers when the issue at stake is particularly sensitive. Senior trade association representatives confirmed these notions:

> There are messages that you want to get across to government that you do not want your company's name associated with, and it's easier to have someone else deliver the message than just the company. The company might also be giving that message. But it's nice having, you know, third party support (Interview 19, trade association).

The last category that emerged from the analysis of the data concerning the reasons firms join sectorial trade associations, relates to the key features that differentiate the several typologies of trade associations, as well as trade associations from other intermediaries. As highlighted in Chapter 2 there are different typologies of trade associations operating across the aerospace industry. Namely, the main distinction relates to professional associations such as the Royal Academy of Engineering, industry wide associations such as the CBI, and sector specific trade associations, which are the focus of this study. Even though firms in the UK aerospace industry may be members of several types, informants emphasised how the different organisations operating as intermediaries have very different aims and objectives, as well as impact towards representing specific industry interests. This is clearly evident from the following quote from the interview with the CEO of a large prime:

> The CBI is generic, and you need more horsepower such as in sector specific trade association (Interview 8, firm).

Firms are thus members of several trade associations and consider them as multi-layer building blocks as all of them will contribute towards the development of a particular narrative. Hence, firms will convey different kinds of messages through the various typologies of trade or business associations depending on the specific issue they are confronted with as mentioned by an industry expert:

> Some of these organisations are much better than others, some of them have got more money than others. I think they come with different strengths and different weaknesses (Interview 16, industry expert).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the different types of associations varies considerably in terms of the contextual and environmental conditions. In his study on the different organisations that formed a corporation's institutional field, Barley (2010) highlighted how in the US during the 70s the most influential organisations were those associations that spanned industries. In juxtaposition, several informants emphasised how in the current UK aerospace industry context, sectorial and professional trade associations are more effective in conveying their interests. The associative framework in the aerospace industry is very well organised both at national level and across the various regions. This characteristic has enabled the associations to establish strong links and relationships with decision makers. They are seen to have a greater level of knowledge and understanding

of the industry's specific issues, i.e. technical, legal or commercial and will be considered by policymakers as reliable industry representatives. As put forward by the CEO of a regional trade association:

> They [peak association] probably have much bigger membership than we do in total number of players, but they are much less focused. We have a relatively small membership, something around 160, that includes companies, universities and other relevant institutions but we are very heavily focused on our sector or sectors because we cover aerospace, to a degree defence and space (Interview 24, trade association).

Firm representatives, who are members of both typologies of organisations, confirmed the view that peak associations or organisations representing broader interests are taken into consideration for broader issues and rather relied on sectoral organisations when industry specific issues were at stake. Typical responses were:

> The CBI tends to take a broader economic view and will tend to focus on the broader economy and not get so involved in specific issues. They have done some work on defence, but they are not really seen as a credible voice in that arena (Interview 23, firm).

Together, the different patterns that have emerged from the data analysis build on extant literature on CPA and contribute to the understanding of why trade associations are key political actors in relation to the business-government relations field. Moreover, this section has underlined that the membership base of trade associations in the UK aerospace industry is diverse as firms choose to join trade associations for a variety different reasons, extending previous accounts that have focused on different contexts (e.g. Battisti and Perry 2015; Van Waarden 1992). The differences between small and large firms, particularly in terms of their interests, aims and objectives have wider implications, and are the motive for tensions that cut through most sectorial associations, both at the national and regional level. These tensions culminate in the capability of trade associations to align the diverging interests and put forward a common voice that truly represents all its members.

5.2.2 Contextual conditions

The second theme that has emerged from the data analysis covers the characteristics of the UK's political environment. These feature the structure of the political system and the

different organisations and institutional stakeholders with which trade associations relate. In terms of the latter, particular attention is given to national and local government, as well as to the role of individual MPs. Furthermore, this section will highlight broader environmental characteristics and how changes in the political system and the perception of institutions and institutional change can influence trade associations' role and activities.

The environment in which trade associations develop and undertake political activities is densely populated by a broad spectrum of institutional actors as well as numerous other organisations and intermediaries with which they interact. This environment is complex, dynamic and subject to continuous economic, social and political shifts. Examples of these shifts include changes in government, the EU referendum and the international financial crisis that struck in 2007. The purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the political system, but rather to underline the key institutional and organisational stakeholders that form the institutional field based on informants' perception of such environment[43].

The institutional field is defined as "set of organizational populations and the relations that embed members of these populations into a social system or network with a purpose" (Barley 2010: 780). Identifying the key organisations and institutions is necessary to understand the environment in which trade associations function (Keim and Hillman 2008) and are embedded (Granovetter 1985). Figure 10 is an attempt to simplify and contribute to understanding the context in which trade associations operate, position them within the wider context of intermediaries and institutional actors, and underline their relationships[44]. Hence, as underlined by a trade association CEO, meta-organisations included within this study interact with political institutions and non-political institutions:

> Our stakeholders would be LEPs, there would be organisations like UKTI, there would be organisations like the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department of

[43] This includes perceptions other than of association managers, of firm managers as well because they are able, through their membership and/or key positions in trade association committees, to influence trade association strategy and activities.

[44] The type and strength of the relationship will vary according to regional and national associations and stakeholders; nevertheless, this map attempts to represent the different levels. The map was developed following interviews with informants and was then revised following discussions with key informants who were asked to review it.

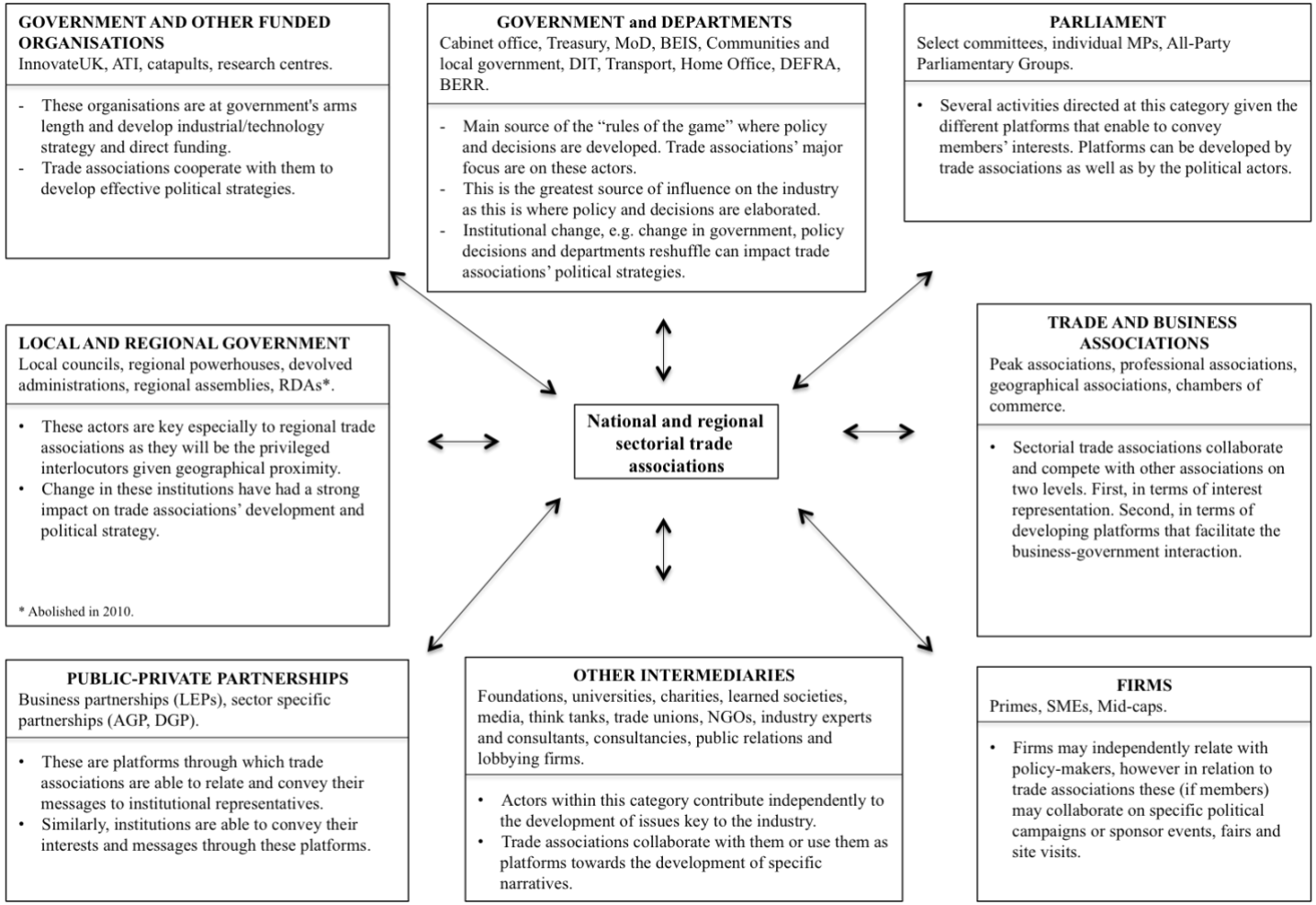
> Communities and Local Government, and then there are wider organisations such as the universities in the region […] there is the [automotive trade association], we work closely with them (Interview 12, trade association)[45].

In relation to organisations that do not entail policy or decision-making but try to influence it, trade associations included within this study relate, cooperate and compete with firms, other associations[46] and a broad range of additional organisations and intermediaries. As Keim and Hillman (2008) argue, in relation to understanding a specific environmental context, it is essential to "be aware of all the other organisations that are acting to affect public policy and that could prove to be potential rivals, adversaries, or collaborators within the political environment" (2008: 50). Amongst others, the most recurring actors include firms, think tanks, academic institutions, research centres, trade unions, charities, learned societies, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), chambers of commerce and the media. Moreover, there are also political analysts and aerospace analysts who are opinion formers as well and play an important role in this non-market environment (Interview 17, firm).

[45] The UKTI was replaced by the DTI (Department for International Investment) in 2016 (UKTI 2016)

[46] As previously mentioned there is a variety of different associations including: peak associations, chambers of commerce, associations operating in other sectors, and associations representing firms in relation to their size.

Figure 10: Trade associations' environment



Source: Elaborated by author

These organisations are able, in specific circumstances, to undertake activities that may overlap with activities undertaken by sectorial associations. The findings are coherent with existing studies that have addressed the overlap of services and interest representation amongst different typologies of UK associations (Greenwood and Traxler 2007), as well as the inability of organisations representing interests to dominate over other organisations, given the UK's pluralist tradition (e.g. Hultén, Barron, and Bryson 2012). This study further contributes to the understanding that interest representation activities may overlap between associations and other typologies of organisations, which will be influential and have opportunities to contribute to the public policy shaping discourse. Informants underlined activities of various organisations that could undertake interest representation and advocacy functions. Nevertheless, differences can be emphasised in terms of the underlying reasons and methods related to how and why other organisations operate in the political arena. For example, trade associations will drive a certain agenda whereas academic organisations will supposedly examine a given problem objectively. Comparably, as mentioned by a firm CEO, a clear case is provided by think tanks and how they contribute to developing a particular narrative:

> I think that think tanks are often influential. […] They won't try to lobby, they will try to be analytic in the way they come at a problem […] because if you ask a think tank to look at an issue, and they look at an issue, what they conclude will be based on deductive logic and research and educated opinion. Whereas, if you come through a trade association clearly they are trying to represent their membership, so that is a different kind of agenda (Interview 17, firm).

Even though the notion that think tanks are key actors is a recurrent theme amongst informants, the interview data underlines contrasting perspectives regarding their role and function. Some informants viewed them as independent organisations that provide evidence-based research and analysis on a wide range of issues, whereas other informants and documentary data demonstrated that think tanks may be used as platforms through which firms convey their messages and build narratives towards promoting specific interests. In relation to the first perspective, the interviewed industry experts all agreed that think tanks are reliable organisations and that policymakers should rely on their information, data and analysis:

> Governments should rely more on independent information stemming from independent sources such as think tanks, but this is very difficult because firms lobby against this for their own interest…for example, Trident is superficial, but firms continue to lobby for it as it increases profits (Interview 26, industry expert).

In relation to the second perspective the Government Affairs Manager of a large firm, argued that think tanks were organisations instrumental to protecting or enhancing their position, which could be used passively, as a source of intelligence and "industry gossip", and actively to develop and push a certain narrative:

> I think that think tanks are a less cumbersome route than trade associations to try and protect your own immediate company interests. They can work up some quick-fire campaigns, trade associations don't do fire campaigns (Interview 27, firm).

Organisations such as research and manufacturing centres (e.g. the catapults [47]), universities, foundations, and trade unions that have a constant interaction with the business environment may relate with decision makers on specific issues. Additionally, there are professional and sectorial charities such as learned societies, who may at first glance not be considered specifically as lobby organisations but are nevertheless extremely important at influencing the policy environment and developing positive industry narratives[48]. They are able to submit position papers, testify in front of specific commissions such as the parliamentary select committees, and respond to green papers consultations[49]. Another key function of these societies is to establish platforms and forums that enable politicians, regulators, policymakers and key actors in the aerospace industry to relate with each other:

> [The charity] is an independent organisation, non-commercial, not for profit […] and has to report to the charity commission. [The charity] can't lobby but can be influential and can bring people together, sometimes with politicians and civil servants, but

[47] Catapults are not-for-profit, independent technology and innovation centres. They were founded by Innovate UK and their role is to connect businesses with the UK's research and academic communities. There are 10 catapults in the UK (Innovate UK 2015).

[48] Examples of these societies in the UK aerospace sector include the Royal Aeronautical Society, The Air League and the Honourable Company of Air Pilots.

[49] Select committees are established to conduct investigations and to produce reports on a variety of issues, from the conduct of Government to specific subject areas. There are Select committees in both Houses of Parliament (Dorey 2014).

> it will also bring those individuals who work for companies and facilitate their interaction with civil servants (Interview 16, industry expert).

In some respects, these organisations may be acknowledged as organisations that can, in specific circumstances act as intermediaries, as their activities can be placed on the same level as corporate political activities or trade associations' political activities and interest representation functions. These organisations represent the interests of their communities through several platforms such as when government asks for consultation on specific matters. For instance, the government in January 2017 presented a consultation request through the green paper on industrial strategy (BEIS 2017), which created the opportunity for organisations to bring forward their views.

A critical issue for sectorial trade associations linked to competing organisations in the institutional field, relates to having members that operate in different sectors simultaneously, as these will not rely entirely on a specific association. As an industry expert, who had experience in both company and trade association contexts put forward:

> So companies that are active in aerospace but not necessarily totally wedded to aerospace's business their sole source of income…it is important for those companies to have different sets of voices, not just trade associations but alongside those trade associations there are the professional associations and there are the organisations that are established to help the development of future products and systems (Interview 14, industry expert).

These notions are important to emphasize that sectorial trade associations are not the sole influential intermediary active in the business-government relationship within the UK aerospace industry and may have to collaborate with organisations that have the same views or compete with ones that present opposing views. This is valid in terms of interest representation, as well as in terms of their role towards developing bridging platforms for the public and private spheres to interact.

In relation to political institutional stakeholders, trade associations need to relate with a broad range of institutional stakeholders including government, the different governmental departments and agencies, non-departmental public bodies, local councils, combined authorities and devolved administrations, as well as with MPs on an individual

and collective level (i.e. when they are part of select committees or APPGs[50]). There are considerable differences across the country, as well as in terms of how these actors play a role in the policy-making process and how they influence the development of trade associations' political strategy. Local trade associations operating in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland relate primarily with the devolved administrations, whereas the regional trade associations in England engage with LEPs and other forms of local government (interviews 15; 24, trade association).

These different institutional structures present considerable distinctions in terms of how they are composed (i.e. elected or appointed) as well as in terms of the autonomy of funding. The CEO of a trade association operating within a devolved administration underlined the differences between the political institutional context in which the organisation operates and the English context:

> It has a greater degree of power and more importantly, because the two go hand in hand, a greater degree of financing. So that is an important thing, and [the devolved administration] can do things without too much reference to the UK, it has its own devolved responsibilities for economic development. So, it can put money into companies, into infrastructure without necessarily having to refer to the UK, so I can get access to the first minister, I can get access to the economics minister, or any minister (Interview 24, trade association).

Moreover, the devolved administrations have an additional institutional stakeholder in the national government, which is the territorial Secretary of State (Cabinet Office 2013). The relationship between the Secretary of State and the regional trade associations is particularly relevant, as it is one of the limited occasions in which smaller trade associations can relate directly with the national government[51]. The interaction with the executive is usually confined to the national associations as these will have offices in central London and will be able to engage with it on a regular basis.

[50] All-Party Parliamentary Groups are defined as "informal cross-party groups that have no official status within Parliament. They are run by and for Members of the Commons and Lords, though many choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities" (UK Parliament 2017).

[51] The Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are Cabinet ministers and are part of the executive (UK Government 2017).

The different institutional structures affect the development of trade associations and their role within the broader institutional field. In relation to the last quote, the trade association has a direct and strong relationship with the local government, placing it in a position of strength towards representing its members' interests. It must be highlighted that this interaction is not common to all the devolved administrations for two main overarching reasons. Firstly, because of the political environment, i.e. the political atmosphere could be more or less sympathetic to specific business and industrial interests. Secondly, because of the structure and dominance of the aerospace industry in each region, for example, Wales presents a stronger aerospace presence than Scotland (Rhodes 2017), thus the sector will be particularly relevant for Welsh politicians and policymakers (Llewellyn-Jones 2015).

Nonetheless, the main actor in the British context is the national government given its executive powers (e.g. Boléat 2003; Dorey 2014), as was agreed by the entirety of respondents included within this research. Hence, the government has a considerable influence on the aerospace industry, which is evident from its strong relationship with it. The strong and intertwined links between the two spheres (i.e. public and private) are a recurrent theme within the data, as emphasised by the CEO of a trade association:

> Pretty much wherever you go in the world and see an aerospace industry; that is actually because government and industry are working together. It doesn't tend to work if government isn't supporting it (Interview 12, trade association).

As highlighted in Chapter 3 the aerospace industry is broadly divided in two main segments, i.e. civil and defence, and this research finds that there are contrasting perspectives on the interaction between government and the two sectors. On one hand, several informants agreed that in terms of business-government relations the two sectors essentially overlap, as once firms (that operate in both sectors) establish relations with political institutions the benefits may flow from one sector to the other. This is even more valid when taking into account trade associations, given that the vast majority of them do not differentiate between these two sectors in terms of interest representation. As the government affairs manager of one of the key industrial actors describes, during a Parliamentary Select Committee hearing, the relationship between industry and the political institutional environment as:

> […] aerospace is politics with wings on it. The two parts are totally interlinked, whether we like it or not sometimes. Before joining Airbus, I worked in the automotive sector and there was nowhere near the amount of involvement. The most important thing for us in the industry is to work with that the right way. Sometimes it can get in the way, but it is usually beneficial. Therefore, the two are definitely interlinked (House of Commons 2011, HC 735-II: 48).

On the other hand, informants recognised differences in the relationships with the two sectors and government, as in the civil sector companies sell to private and public customers, whereas in relation to the defence sector customers are always governments (House of Commons 2011). As a trade association representative explained:

> […] the government is the customer, and the regulator and the user of the equipment, and so the relationship between government and industry is just very different. Because with civil aerospace government is just trying to make the business environment as globally competitive as possible. And it's a much easier thing to achieve than on the defence side where because the MoD is user, purchaser, regulator, etcetera…it's a very different relationship (Interview 19, trade association).

One of the areas in which these disparities are readily observable relates to the development of formal government partnerships with the two sectors, namely the Aerospace Growth Partnership (AGP) and the Defence Growth Partnership (DGP). The first is well developed and has progressed strongly since its establishment in 2010 (AGP 2016). The government's role is to engage constructively with the manufacturing industry to develop, and the products are then sold to customers in the UK and throughout the world. Whereas in the second, the government is the customer and has a more conflicted relationship, and that has limited the DGPs development. Several informants confirmed these diverse interactions:

> […] on the civil side, we tend to be asking for support selling aircraft abroad, research investment, investment in skills and training. And we ask for all those things on the defence side as well, but there is an additional relationship of…we are selling our products, […]. So, in some respects the government is more reluctant to have such strong relations. […] The reason they are reluctant is because they want to maintain strength in contract negotiations (Interview 23, firm).

The above quotes underline the different role that the government can have in relation to the industry, namely customer, regulator and advocate (Interview 8, firm). This perspective was recurrent amongst respondents from the firm side, as a large prime CEO commented:

> In our case the customer and government were the same thing in essence. So we sold into governments so basically influencing the government is the same thing as influencing customers but I felt it was all about having influence (Interview 17, firm).

Nevertheless, one of the main aspects that was emphasised, indistinctly of the background of the informant, is that both parties (i.e. government and industry) benefit from this close relationship. From one side, government will rely on the aerospace industry to provide national socio-economic outcomes including the development of high-skilled jobs, technology and research that can spin-off to other sectors, long-term economic prosperity and national security (RAeS 2017). From the other side the industry will look to establish a strong relationship with government towards selling its products, supporting exports, gaining research investment, investment in skills and training, as well as creating a positive environment in which to operate (Interviews 17; 23, firm). Amongst these, one of the most evident and important features relates to firms exporting their products and selling them to foreign governments, as the government will have a decisive role in the outcome of such undertakings. Bob Keen, Head of Government Relations of BAE Systems, underlined these notions during an oral evidence session in the House of Commons:

> […] it is not just good enough to have terrific products, absolutely necessary though that is…you also require absolutely joined-up support of the British Government because the overseas customer is buying into the relationship with the UK Government. The key to our success has been strong political support (House of Commons 2011, HC 735-II: 48).

Historically, in relation to the development of collective action and the establishment and development of trade associations, the UK has been characterised by a strong involvement and influence of the government, which developed over time. Politicians and civil servants required a strong business intermediary and a single voice representing the industry with which they could relate. Moran (2006: 457) argues "to end half a century of institutional rivalry in business representation was encouraged by the state, which by

the early 1960s actively looked for a single business partner in its new ventures in economic planning".

Having considered the government's paramount role, it is important to highlight other features of the UK's political system, which emerged from the data and which have an impact on trade associations' role and functions. As an informant put it:

> We don't have a single entity…that is not the way government policy is formed, it is not the way it works. Many people have a voice, […] the treasury has a voice, the defence has a voice and the rest of the political machine has a voice (Interview 14, industry expert).

A characteristic of the UK's political structure, which differentiates it from other European political systems, is assumed by individual members of parliament and their significant function in terms of connecting industry with political and governing institutions:

> […] in the UK the way politics works is that there is of course a government with ministers who make the national decisions, but they are essentially influenced by members of parliament who may be in the government but may not be, those members of parliament all come from constituencies, i.e. they are voted in. And they are very interested in what goes on in their constituency (Interview 20, trade association).

Hence, having acknowledged the strength of the executive, and the downgrade of parliament's role in the policy-making process (Dorey 2014: 74), MPs that are not part of the government and do not hold ministerial positions (these include opposition MPs as well) are an extremely relevant stakeholder, which impact trade associations' political activities. This is because political activities do not only entail the activities directed towards influencing a specific policy but entail the broader set of actions undertaken to relate with officials, regulators and politicians, who may or may not be involved in a specific policy making process. The UK aerospace industry is spread across the nation, and the MPs that represent constituencies in which there is a strong aerospace industrial presence will usually be particularly interested in the development of the industry given the benefits in terms of employment and economic contribution to the area as confirmed by an industry expert:

> […] MPs that represent constituencies with a high number of aerospace companies play a great role. As SMEs are scattered across the country, firms and associations can use these features as resources to lobby MPs (Interview 16, industry expert).

This is a key feature of the institutional environment that clearly has a strong impact on trade associations' operations, as managers will need to consider the activities directed towards individual MPs when developing political strategies. In addition to political objectives and commitments vis-à-vis their constituencies, MPs may become interested in affairs concerning aerospace, and thus influential, because of personal interests or their professional background (Interview 12, trade association). Hence, informants underlined that establishing and maintaining political connections with members of parliament, who are either directly involved in aerospace matters or show a particular interest in aerospace, is a cornerstone of political action.

Sun, Mellahi, and Thun concede that political connections can undeniably be considered as a strategic value and that their value may shift in time and "become a handicap at a later stage" (2010: 1161). Even though the abovementioned study considers emerging markets, this research finds that negative externalities from political embeddedness can ensue in developed markets as well. Fostering relationships with MPs is a fundamental feature of trade associations' political activities, but there are instances where shifting relations with political stakeholders can have a damaging impact as highlighted by various respondents:

> They can turn on you as well. So, for example, another one of our local MPs (…) is not such a supporter of ours, which baffles me but this person is a supporter of our major competitor, even talks about them in the House of Commons and doesn't talk about us. We have tried, a lot of outreach to this person, but it doesn't seem to work so we just leave it (Interview 22, firm).

Hence, even highly embedded organisations that constantly attempt to grow the volume of their political connections face variations in their political networks, as the political and policy environments are dynamic (Boléat 2003: 89-90). This is another characteristic, regarding the institutional environment and the relationship between trade associations and political actors, which may affect their role and political activities. Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani (2013: 96) argue "the evolution of the political system can present incumbent firms with difficulties, as their previous CPA is rendered less effective in the

new context". This research extends these views to the political activities of trade associations and finds that in the context of the UK aerospace industry institutional change at national, regional and local level has presented meta-organisations with increasing challenges. Although scholars (e.g. Wright et al. 2005) have called for additional research in emerging markets, due to the institutional volatility of such contexts, institutional change can occur even within highly institutionalised environments (Wooten and Hoffman 2016).

Informants from both regional and national trade associations, highlighted how changes in the political environment have made it more difficult for organisations to relate with policymakers and that associations have had to continuously react and adapt to these changes, or in the best-case scenario, anticipate them. The nature of the fluctuations in the institutional field can vary consistently: from changes in interpersonal relationships between managers and politicians, to reshuffles in cabinet or ministerial positions following a general election (Keim and Hillman 2008); and from broad structural transformations stemming from changes in economic policy to exogenous political shocks (Siegel 2007). An example of institutional change that has affected the development of political strategy is presented by an informant with extensive experience in a large aerospace trade body who described the shift in strategy following the 2017 general election[52]:

> They are now doing more on the parliamentary side because of the nature of the minority government, which makes backbenchers more effective and influential […] backbench MPs became a much more important stakeholder. Whereas in the past we took the view that […] engaging with government ministers or officials was the most important aspect and that will be sufficient (Interview 29, firm).

A powerful variation in the institutional environment, which informants perceived to have profound effects on trade associations, has entailed policies regarding local and national governance. In the interest of economic growth, the UK has historically adopted a centralised approach to policymaking (Hildreth and Bailey 2013), but global dynamics have shifted the focus towards local geographical, historical and socio-cultural

[52] The 2017 general election resulted in the development of a hung parliament, whereby the Conservative party, which was in power at the time of the election, lost its majority of seats (Syal and Travis 2017).

influences, which has placed greater emphasis on local economic policy development (Dicken 2011). Hence, the UK's history is scattered with several attempts to move from a centralised system to one that places an emphasis on local and regional entities. One of the key events that has influenced the development and function of trade associations was the launch of the nine Regional Development Agencies[53] (RDAs), and their subsequent abolishment by the Coalition government in 2010 in favour of a series of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)[54].

The findings seem to suggest that the institution of the RDAs permitted the regional trade associations to place themselves in a strong intermediary position. This was possible because the collective organisations faced a solid institutional entity with which they could relate, attempt to influence and gain funding from. As underlined by the former Head of Economic and Political Affairs of a trade association during the late 90s:

> The relationship between central government and regional support… these were the days of the Regional Development Agencies, and this is why the regional associations were becoming important (Interview 20, trade association).

The RDAs had the capabilities to develop economic strategies and then the capacity, in terms of economic and human resources, to work with the various industrial stakeholders to implement it [55]. These notions are confirmed by a variety of informants from different backgrounds:

> The RDA used to focus quite heavily on the sectors that employed the most people and produced the most GDP in their areas, so when the [RDA] was around here it focused a lot in the aerospace supply chain in the area because that was very important to the

[53] The Regional Development Agencies were "set up with the intention that they would become arms of the proposed elected Regional Assemblies…[and for] producing the new Regional Strategy and in taking over responsibility for regional planning" (Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform 2010). These entities were developed to contrast the substantial economic disparities in the different areas in the UK and produce specific policy and regional strategy that best suited each geographical context.

[54] The LEPs are voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses to determine local economic priorities and lead on economic growth within their areas (Lepnetwork 2017).

[55] The RDAs produced the Regional Economic Strategies (RES), together with key stakeholders, which was the main tool to identify priorities towards achieving regional growth (Allen 2002).

> economy and it would provide supporting finance for the various levels of that supply chain (Interview 14, industry expert).
>
> The biggest selling point for official structures at regional or local level, whether it is the old RDAs or the devolved administrations currently, is that they do have their own budgets. And they can therefore invest in industries or industry academic links or give R&D credits or tax incentives for building, etc., which is something the central government, struggles with (Interview 29, firm).

Moreover, informants argued how the regional trade associations were not seen as a threat to the national ones in terms of developing a national presence and gaining access to central government circles, but nevertheless were in the process of forming notable lobbying and networking functions (Interview 18, trade association). Additionally, their relationship with RDAs, as well as the funding and subsidies they received from the institutional bodies placed the associations in a position of strength, which allowed them to increase membership and weight in their interest representation functions (Interview 21, trade association). On one side, the RDAs worked in close partnership with the regional bodies to support business development particularly for small and medium enterprises. On the other, the regional bodies would interact with the RDAs as the latter would have an important role within national committees (Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform 2010), it would thus be an avenue for regional trade associations to exert pressure up to the national policy making level.

The ensuing establishment of the LEPs drove the regional trade associations to face several issues that affected their political strategy and effectiveness of their political activities. The crucial change concerned the fact that the RDAs in each region were replaced by multiple LEPs, which did not have the same budgetary powers as the RDAs and most powers were shifted back to London (Bailey and Berkeley 2014). Moreover, these changes forced local trade associations to interact with a growing number of stakeholders, and to adapt their communication approaches to convey their concerns to a wider audience. In many cases issues related to aerospace engineering and advanced manufacturing require a high level of technical understanding by actors operating in the policy-making side, which was destabilised by the institutional shift and organisations have had to develop a more formal and presentational approach. The trade associations' small organisational structure and limited resources weakened their ability to effectively

interact with policymakers and be influential. These notions are clearly exposed in the comments of a regional trade association's CEO:

> Because an organisation like mine, which is only a small trade association, does not have the capacity now to go and do what it used to do with a regional development agency with five different Local Enterprise Partnerships, we can't go and have the same conversation five times, we can't go and influence the same initiative five times. Now we got [LEPs] they all got their own strategic economic plan. They all got what they consider their priorities. We find it very difficult to influence those strategies in order to help our members in the aerospace sector (Interview 12, trade association).

Moreover, the abolishment of the RDAs changed the relationship between the regional bodies and the firms as put forward by a senior trade association manager:

> And then of course the RDAs got abolished […], so to some extent some of the big pulling power and subsidies, the RDAs disappeared with that, and bang-bang went the free membership (Interview 20, trade association).

Another variation in the political landscape, which affected trade associations, concerns the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Changes in the political weight and authority after the establishment of the devolved administrations have been crucial in terms of the development of the local forums into strong regional intermediaries. As these institutional entities gained additional powers to develop policy and implement rules and regulations, trade associations adapted their political activities. A parallel can be drawn to how firms and organisations adapted their political activities to face the development of new supranational institutional actors (Woll 2007).

These findings are divergent from the notions that local governments are not important to trade associations and that devolution processes poses threats to them as underlined by Boléat (2003: 98). Specifically, Boléat (2003) focuses on the impact that these changes have on national trade associations (e.g. in terms of additional costs and staff to keep abreast of changes at the local level), and overlooks the impact on regional trade associations. Instead this study suggests that these changes in local institutional arrangements did have, even if with diverse outcomes across the UK, an impact on regional trade bodies. Comparisons amongst the different regional trade associations highlighted that organisations operating within devolved regions managed to develop

strong relations with key institutional actors that allowed them to strengthen their position as business intermediaries.

Nevertheless, it is significant to stress that a key factor in the development of regional associations, as well as in the relationships and potential influence with local institutions is given by industry characteristics, such as a strong presence of aerospace within a particular region and its contribution to the local economy. A noteworthy example can be taken by the difference in employment in Wales and Scotland, where the percentage of total UK aerospace employment are 10.1% and 2.8% respectively (Rhodes 2017), which clearly highlights the different contributions in these contexts.

Finally, there are endemic political, societal and technological changes that have affected the business-government relationship on a broader level that does not entail a specific geographical context. As emphasised in Chapter 2, the growing institutional influence on the business environment (Hart 2007) increased organisations' political activities and their attempts towards establishing relationships with policymakers and operating in the political arena. In turn, this produced an environment in which there are an increasing number of organisations that attempt to influence public policy:

> The size of the public sector has shrunk, years ago you used to have easy access to civil servants, they would be glad to take a meeting from you. [Now] it's much more difficult, it is becoming such a crowded environment as well, […] it is much more difficult to get heard (Interview 16, industry expert).

This is particularly striking if the level of analysis is focused on a specific economic sector. The political institutional actors that are able to interact with the multiplicity of stakeholders that seek to gain access to the political arena are limited, as underlined by an industry expert with experience in corporate and associational environments:

> There are few politicians that can be lobbied, there are few interested and that have the capacity to intervene…there are few access points (Interview 16, industry expert).

Moreover, trade associations, as any other organisation that is trying to influence the political environment, have been challenged by rapid technological changes (e.g. the advent and preponderance of social media and new communication channels), and have had to adapt to maintain their influence and presence in the political and social arenas.

They have had to broaden and modify their political strategy to include specific communication strategies through new tools and platforms. As trade association managers in the 90s had to encompass television and radio appearances in their spectrum of informational political activities (Interview 20, trade association), in recent years representatives have had to develop strategies that provide them with a constant presence on social media platforms. These findings build on and extend previous studies (e.g. Boléat 1997) that have analysed how market changes (e.g. privatisation and internationalisation processes) have influenced trade associations' structure, by highlighting how other exogenous changes have required trade associations to adapt and revise their strategies and activities.

Notwithstanding the nature or magnitude of institutional change, some trade associations can prepare in advance towards changes in the institutional environment. The findings suggest that the larger trade associations are better equipped to either anticipate, or react to changes within the institutional environment, whereas smaller trade associations have suffered from these institutional variations. This distinction is emphasised throughout the respondents' answers, for example a regional trade association representative highlighted how changes of actors in key departments would alter their political connections and ultimately undermine their ability to effectively relate with the decision-making arena:

> One of the things that we have struggled with is this changing of people in leading departments...that can be very difficult to build a strategy around, how that is going to happen…you can spend a lot of time trying to create something or make things happen but because of this instability, you have no idea whether or not it will get signed off, because we are playing political football between interventionist and market oriented people and it does seem to be in a flux of who are winning at any time. It's amazing we get anything done (Interview 18, trade association).

In juxtaposition, a senior representative of a national trade association argued how his organisation was well prepared and accustomed to dealing with changes and reshuffles in government departments:

> With politicians in some ways, it is easier because if there is a change of government, a change of ministers, a reshuffle…there is a set pool of people they are going to choose from (Interview 19, trade association).

The ability of larger associations to deal with changes in the institutional environment and the perception that institutional change can be dealt with is given by several factors including more resources at their disposal, a greater number and stronger ties with institutional stakeholders, as well as a greater comprehension and knowledge regarding the mechanisms of the governmental machine. Larger associations will generally undertake a more structured approach to developing connections in the political spheres as opposed to sole interpersonal relationships. In relation to the last quote (Interview 19, trade association), the trade association knew exactly who the candidates for the positions were and had already put in place political tactics by establishing contacts and informing them on the current situation and issues concerning the aerospace industry. These notions can be linked to firms' abilities to respond to institutional change as highlighted by Feinberg, Hill, and Darendeli (2015: 35), whereby organisations with increased monitoring capacity and ability to manage political ties will be more responsive. Additionally, assumed the ability to develop effective political strategies the national trade associations operating in the UK are able to cope relatively easily with such changes because of the generally orderly and steady nature of the institutional context, as opposed to contexts that are prone to sudden political shocks.

Nevertheless, both typologies of trade associations have faced instances in which their political role was undermined by the institutional context. The abolishment of the RDAs deprived the regional associations of their main institutional counterpart. This institutional change produced a gap in the business-government relationship as the local industrial players were left without a political institutional actor, with whom they could relate and that had the capability of developing and introducing policy. The regional trade associations operating in the devolved administrations faced the problem of a redefinition in the relationships with the new political and regulatory entities. Hence, the structure of the political system, and variations within it, played a key function (positive and negative, depending on the area) in defining the role of trade associations in the UK aerospace industry.

The specific institutional contexts and the resultant relationships between industrial and political stakeholders may be an additional explanation to understand the shifting political role of trade associations. Thus, why trade associations in specific contextual conditions are oriented towards providing 'market' services and have thus delegated their political

activities to the national association, and why other trade associations see in the development of political activities and interacting with politicians their main functions. These notions can be conceptualised as "institutional gaps", whereby the interest representation organisation finds itself deprived of an institutional counterpart. This in turn weakens its political influence and ability to effectively play a role in the policy-making process. Institutional gaps differ from the predominant notions of "institutional voids" (Khanna, Palepu, and Sinha 2005) as these mainly focus on emerging economies, and propose the idea that institutions are weak or completely absent. In this case, organisations operate in an environment characterised by strong institutions at the national level, but they do not have the specific institutional players at the local level that enable them to operate as strong political actors.

5.2.3 Strategy formulation

The last second order dimension connected to trade associations' embeddedness in the environment in which they operate focuses on the factors that affect the formulation of political strategy. These factors may stem from the external environment such as the required ability of trade associations to "tap into" governments' agenda and align their strategy to government objectives, as well as internally within the trade associations. In terms of the latter these mainly include trade associations resources, as well as a key emergent concept, which relates to the role of the CEO or managing director in charge of the organisation.

The findings highlight various exogenous factors that may affect the development of trade associations' political agenda. External influences can entail political, fiscal and given the nature of the industry, also geo-political and military events. In relation to the first, trade association representatives underlined how similarly to the broader political role, institutional changes or policy decisions stemming from the executive could force the organisation to modify the specific direction of its political strategy:

> Events include general elections, fiscal events such as budget and spending review, SDSR [56], new approach to the industrial

[56] The SDSR (Strategic Defence and Security Review) is the government's document that defines the defence strategy including the UK's threats and the necessary capabilities required to face them (UK Government 2015). This document is particularly relevant for aerospace companies as it defines the government priorities in relation to defence spending.

> strategy, the Scottish referendum, and the development of new departments after a change of government. This is what drives policy strategy (Interview 12, trade association).

Hence, external factors could cause trade associations to change their political strategy, both in terms of its content, as well as in terms of which political stakeholders should be targeted. For example, as previously mentioned, following the general election in 2017, where the leading Conservative government lost the parliamentary majority (The Guardian 2017), trade associations and other organisations attempting to influence policy have had to keep into consideration the growing role of backbench MPs, which had become more effective and influential given the nature of the minority government (Interview 29, firm).

In relation to sector specific events, decisions to invest or upscale military spending by the national government, leading to military intervention would directly impact the way trade associations relate with the government and with specific government departments, such as the Ministry of Defence. A former trade association CEO described how during the Iraq war the interaction between the organisation and institutional stakeholders changed:

> I suppose, probably the most significant event was the fact that the Iraq war started in 2001 and I think, you have to understand that politics gets very different in war time, (…) and so it was important for us that government knew that we were going to be able to back them in a physical sense, supply what they needed, which individual companies did but which we also supported. And I guess that was an unexpected event, we didn't know there was going to be a war, we couldn't know that until it happened, but then we had to react to that. It wasn't something that was totally game changing, it was just the way government behaves in war time is just different from the way it behaves in peace time, particularly the MoD, whereas they might take two years to make a decision they can do it in ten minutes in a war if you are with me and the whole pace of things becomes much different (Interview 21, trade association).

Moreover, trade associations' strategy could also be affected by exogenous events outside national borders and "usual" operational environments. Chapter 2 highlighted instances of changing supranational frameworks beyond the political spheres to which organisations were used to, which ultimately influenced their political activities (e.g.

Woll 2007). The empirical findings of this research contribute to these notions, by providing additional evidence as to how trade associations have had to react to international matters. An interesting example that was mentioned during the interviews concerned the European Trading Emissions System (EU ETS) implemented in 2012 (*European Commission COM (2012) 697*). The legislation was intended to apply to emissions from flights from, to and within the European Economic Area (EEA) and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The measure required airlines to amend their emission reporting and contribute towards reducing aviation emissions. Following pressure from foreign governments and airlines (i.e. not based in the EU) on the UK industry, national UK trade associations lobbied the European Union to amend the legislation. Consequently, the scope was restricted to flights operating within the EEA excluding from it airlines based outside the EU. One of executives involved in the lobbying activities highlighted how the exogenous factor influenced their actions:

> They used us as the whipping boy to say to the European Union "you need to amend this piece of legislation we don't like". Now actually ETS the aviation part of it had absolutely nothing to do with aerospace manufacturers at all. If anything, it was more airlines that had to amend their emissions reporting and maybe buy more aircraft, in many ways we actually liked ETS because it encouraged people to buy newer cleaner aircraft. So, we weren't unhappy about it and suddenly the Chinese stopped "But this has nothing to do with us". "We don't care, you are in Europe and you have to tell your governments to stop". We had to go into a complete crisis mode (Interview 22, firm).

A constant and recurring theme across the interview data, in relation to the definition of political strategy, relates to matching the national policymaker's agenda, as mentioned by several trade association informants and corroborated by firm representatives involved in trade association's political strategizing:

> To be effective, political strategies have to leverage the government's agenda. This is the ABC of government relations (Interview 13, firm).

The analysis and triangulation of the data suggests that trade associations develop their political strategies whilst taking into consideration interests and agenda of policymakers as this could impact the overall effectiveness of the trade association's political activities.

Several informants highlighted how trade associations develop political activities whilst trying to match government priorities in order to create a shared agenda. The following interview excerpts with a trade association Government Affairs Manager (Interview 12) and former CEO (Interview 21) highlight different instances of how the organisations would build on government priorities:

> A critical feature is making government priorities a common agenda, for example George Osborne's Northern Powerhouse. When government decides that these projects are important then the association should acknowledge it and build its policy accordingly. [The association] will tap in government priorities and agenda and try to align its strategies and aims to that (Interview 12, trade association).

> One of the things we certainly did was try to fit what we wanted into what the government said was its strategy. We would look very carefully at what their political, overall political strategy was to see how we could take what we wanted and say this fits, because it is much harder, almost impossible to persuade government to do something which isn't in its strategy at all. […] You need to accommodate to an extent (Interview 21, trade association).

The interpretation of the data suggests various reasons behind this approach. The first, relates to trade associations' inability to undertake confrontational activities and the consequent need to adopt collaborative approaches, which may diverge from firms' attitude to political activity. Whilst keeping in mind that an alignment of interests between industry and government spheres is one of the key aspects to consider when developing political strategy within any organisation, firms can leverage assets and resources to pressure policy-makers that trade associations do not have. Firms may threaten institutional actors to relocate their business elsewhere, delay investment decisions or lay off employees in order to draw attention on specific issues[57]. This approach would entail devising a political strategy that engages in a more adversarial relationship with political stakeholders. Trade associations do not have the same resources and hence have to adapt their political strategy accordingly. An interesting notion was raised by various

[57] Several companies threatened the government to move production sites to other European nations during the Brexit referendum campaign and on-going negotiations (Collingridge and Stubbington 2017).

informants who argued that even though trade associations provide information and knowledge that can help policymakers draft policy, differently from firms, they do not provide any goods or services and therefore are necessitated to demonstrate a stronger level of collaboration. As mentioned by the Head of Government Affairs of a large company who had an extensive trade association experience:

> What trade bodies don't want to do is lose access to government. It's unlikely a company like us will ever lose access to government, even if our relationship sours at different levels, because we are delivering certain capabilities to government we will always have that relationship, whereas a trade association is not delivering a good or service to government specifically. So their relationship with government means that they have to provide value to government as well as to their membership, therefore they need to look at how they can support government agendas (Interview 29, firm).

These notions are in line with Woll's argument that "the apparent lobbying success is therefore not an indication of 'power', in the sense of victory in a business-government conflict, but of the convergence of business and government objectives" (2007: 59). Moreover, as underlined by a senior trade association executive with extensive experience in both company and trade association environments, the relationship with institutional players has to entail a profound cooperative approach:

> […] it's kind of softer…I have to be nice to everybody. One of my members says she can never do my job because I have to be nice to everybody. I have to be friends with everybody. If you are a big company, then sometimes you can throw your weight around and be a bit firmer (Interview 19, trade association).

The second and strongly interconnected reason behind this compliance can be ascribed to the strong dependence that the industry has on the government, including but not limited to funding, procurement and export support. This happens at both regional and national level depending on the different trade associations, their membership and main political stakeholders. One regional trade association CEO highlighted how their lack of resources increased their dependency on the local political institution:

> We don't have the resources, we don't have the capability to create a world class aerospace sector […] on our own. We need a strong regional government input into that (Interview 15, trade association).

At national level, an informant with extensive experience in several trade associations underlined how in the past 15 years the industry consistently lobbied the government for research investment. During this time period trade associations altered their political strategy several times to adjust to the changes in the institutional environment, as well as to match the different issues policy-makers were facing, whilst constantly asking for the same kind of support. The following quote clearly highlights how the political strategy would shift according to institutional changes:

> The issue is the same, we want money for research, but over that time we have had a change in government, we have had different issues come and go. So, when I first started out the issue was "we need money, we give you jobs". So, we lobbied on that, then the economic crash happened, "We are a very sustainable industry, the whole economy is falling apart, you give us money we will save the economy". So, it's still the same thing but you have to connect with the government's agenda […] you have to evolve the message to the political climate but in my experience the ask is pretty much consistent (Interview 23, firm).

The final and to some extent interlinked reason behind this strong compliance to decisions' makers agenda can be linked to the profuse and growing number of organisations that attempt to relate and influence institutional actors, as well as the notion that politicians' only real dependence lies on their constituents' votes. This implies that politicians are not (or at least should not be) bound to any specific business interest and will try to achieve their political objectives through any means possible. Consequently, if a particular sector is considered as not assisting them achieve their political goals (e.g. reducing unemployment and fostering economic growth) they will support, if possible, another sector that will. Thus, sectoral trade associations need to demonstrate that they are proficient at contributing to broader political objectives:

> We have to make sure that they feel like what our sector strategy is doing is helping solve their problems and their political objective. […] at the end of the day these are just politicians, they have political objectives, if we are not delivering, helping them deliver their political objectives, they do not need to care about us. And so, in some ways, building that relationship is about understanding the politics of it and being seen to be addressing the politics of a situation, but being credible in the way in which you did it (Interview 19, trade association).

Nevertheless, industry and specifically trade associations are not always able to match government priorities and align their strategy to the government's agenda. The issue regarding the construction of a third runway at Heathrow airport in London is a clear example of when the two agendas do not match, and common priorities are not established:

> There is no part of the aerospace industry that I know of that believes that that runway is wrong. It is case made, it is completely clear and obvious that it is needed, and that is known in government of course, and that lobby is been very strong for a very long time. […] but the government hasn't made the decision to do that, so there is one example where the industry is completely sure that that is the right thing to do but government isn't (Interview 14, industry expert).

Additionally, how policy-makers view and consider specific organisations will influence the development of their strategy, and this will change according to specific socio-economic and political periods. While describing his experience within a company, a trade association representative highlighted how, just after the financial crash whilst the economy was struggling, the organisation he was working for was creating thousands of jobs. This situation produced a positive image of the company, which affected the approach of its political activities:

> So, the [company] was almost literally the only good news story, good news economic story in the UK. Which meant everyone loved us, which made it easier to talk about who we are and what we want. And so you don't necessarily need to do too much, you don't need to go out of your way to talk about the political narrative, the political narrative is desperate, the politicians are desperate to wrap themselves to [company], and to be seen with [company] (Interview 19, trade association).

Having considered the external and environmental features, which have an impact on the definition of trade associations' political strategy, it is now necessary to contemplate the internal characteristics that have emerged from the data, which may also play a role. These features are mainly related to organisational attributes, inter-firm dynamics within the association, and the role of the person leading the organisation.

Building on previous work (e.g. Barnett 2013; Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017) there seems to be a recurring pattern in the data, which highlights that independently of size

and structure of the association, large firms will play a key role in the definition of associations' political strategy. Specifically, large firms that have existing and strong relations with government and institutional actors (e.g. defence contractors) will enjoy a large political power, which may then be transferred into the trade associations and influence the decision-making process. Subsequently, the trade associations would attempt to build consensus amongst the broader membership. These notions find empirical support from the majority of respondents including industry experts who emphasised that dominant companies are able to push their own interests and objectives on the collective, both from the firm side:

> The political strategies are defined by the main contractors, which have the biggest political weight. Formally the strategies are defined by all the associations' members, but in reality, it is the big companies who decide what to do (Interview 13, firm).

As well as, from CEOs of the trade associations:

> It is generally the prevailing interest of the prime that goes through, we don't try to align we try to find the overlapping interests, which tends to be from the primes perspective (Interview 18, trade association).

> Potentially it will be tilted towards the bigger companies who do have the resources and the louder voice (Interview 19, trade association).

The capability of large firms to influence the definition of trade association's agenda gains even more importance when the national context is considered. A key example has been the development of the AGP through which the industry managed to garner over £ 2 billion worth of funding until 2026 (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2013). As a trade association CEO underlined:

> I would say that at national level we tend to have an ask of government that is largely put together by the big companies because they have the resources and capabilities to produce the evidence base for the ask of government. I would say that the bigger companies tend to be the most proactive and the most influential in terms of guiding policy and government funding (Interview 15, trade association).

Overall, respondents did not find the large firms' dominance as an entirely negative feature within the trade association. Rather, it was underlined how larger firms would

possess the means that would be helpful for the trade association to reach its political strategy objectives as emphasised by a firm respondent[58]:

> I know that they will really hate me saying this, but I think [trade association] is more orientated towards the larger companies and I think that is how it should be (Interview 23, firm).

However, trade associations do establish several platforms and activities aimed at allowing their members, independently of their size and economic and political importance, to have a voice in the definition of their overall strategy. As previously mentioned, larger trade associations will have structured forums that will allow different interests to be heard. Several organisations have committees, boards, interest groups, which are formed with the specific intent of engaging with members towards the definition of an agenda that is developed and agreed by the majority:

> What we have done is we have put more effort in, over the last two years I would say, to understand the issues that our members are facing and then try to develop our own policy aims and objectives based on what they have said (Interview 15, trade association).

Moreover, both large and small organisations will also organise workshops, seminars and develop questionnaires to relate with the membership and understand their challenges, issues and be able to define a strategy accordingly:

> Part of our job is to get out and engage with them, listen to the businesses, get to know the businesses, what are the challenges, what are the issues, and to build up a picture of this kind of the shape of industry. […] It's by understanding those challenges and the shape of industry that we can prioritise (Interview 19, trade association).

Even though large firms do play a dominant role in steering the direction and strategy of trade associations at both national and regional level, a trade association's ability to gather, analyse and summarise the issues from the broader membership rather than from a restricted group of large firms will enable the organisation to legitimately claim to be

[58] A potential limitation of this research relates to the fact that the majority of interviewees from the firm side represent large organisations. These were specifically selected, as they are involved in the trade associations' political strategy development. However, the researcher acknowledges this bias.

representing their entire membership, and possibly a large portion of the industry. This is crucial when interacting with policy-makers and gain institutional legitimacy.

Larger organisations will have the necessary resources to hire a CEO and have a well-defined organisational structure (as evidenced in Chapter 3, Figure 5), that for example includes a board of directors and several internal departments, which in turn will lead to a more formalised decision-making process. In contrast, smaller associations will not have such a structured organisation and will rely on the activities undertaken by the director or manager.

Hence, several informants stressed the notion that the CEO of the trade association was a key determinant in the definition of the organisation's political strategy and in establishing a "policy capable organisation" (Coleman 1988: 51), whereby the association is able to autonomously develop its strategy, which is not a mere sum of members' interests. This is in line with the developments in the broader UK association framework concerning the centrality of the director leading the organisation, as opposed to the previous authority of committees in directing associations' strategy (Boléat 1997; Macdonald 2001).

Comparably to the work of Henisz (2016), who calls for CEOs to act as corporate diplomats[59], this dimension considers that the role of the leading figure managing a trade association can significantly alter the political functions of the organisation and its political impact. Moreover, the findings build on specific calls (Barnett 2017: 6) to investigate how "those who manage a TA play a significant role in forming its agenda and in ensuring its implementation". Trade association executives or informants with significant experience in trade associations mentioned how, regardless of the size of the trade association, several specific characteristics concerning the managing director or CEO including his/her academic and professional background, the ability to develop and deliver complex strategies based on research and data, and be flexible to innovations concerning communication with internal and external stakeholders, were highly

[59] Extant work (Henisz 2016) has aligned the CEOs external facing functions to diplomacy and called for managers to act as corporate diplomats. Corporate diplomacy is the ability to win the hearts and minds of external stakeholders in support of an organizational mission.

influential towards the definition of the organisation's role and political strategy, as evidenced by an informant with extensive trade association experience:

> It does come down to the skills and expertise of the person who is chief executive or director general […] the person who runs the organisation was formally a consultant, so she introduced a lot of ways of working that were based on a consultancy model. So that was her experience, so it was very much influenced by her. [The CEO] who is there now was brought in because it was felt that they were not focusing enough on lobbying and representation, that they had got too distracted on business development and all sorts of other things, work offices around the world (Interview 23, firm).

This was also confirmed by industry experts:

> Each of the trade bodies will have, depending on who they recruit and who is in charge and the nature of the industry, will have their own way of going about things (Interview 16, industry expert).

The main aspects that could be influenced are the overarching aims and direction of the trade association. As emphasised in Chapter 2 trade associations differ consistently, and whilst some organisations will focus on activities directed at shaping the socio-political environment other organisations will focus on market-oriented services (e.g. Barnett 2017; Bennett 1999; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015). Even though the various activities will be examined in greater detail in the next section, it is important to emphasize that the principal orientation of trade associations is extremely mutable and fluid, and the CEO may be considered as a key determinant. These patterns can be found in the data, for example the following quotes, which relate to the same trade association over a number of years, underline how the objectives and thus broad direction of the organisation completely changed because of the CEO. In the first quote the informant emphasises how the main concern of the trade association was to be involved in market-oriented activities, whilst the second underlines the need to focus on lobbying and interest representation activities:

> [the trade association's] successor managed it better, because he was focusing on delivering services to members, classic trade association approach, much more functional, much more service oriented, value for money, that sort of stuff (Interview 21, trade association).

> [the trade association] has six top-level objectives but the first two are the most important, which are: raising the profile and image of the industry and influencing policy. These have been introduced by the new CEO. The other four regard matters such as business development (Interview 12, trade association).

Moreover, there are both positive and negative aspects associated with the impact that the CEO can have on the association. Several informants highlighted how the background, expertise and professional experience of the CEO was strongly related to the importance that he/she would concede to political activities in relation to their overall functions. One interviewee commented:

> […] hiring professional rather than neo-retirees, so people who know the industry, come from the industry or government but who still have got places to go in their career rather than finishing their career off. So, as a stepping-stone for a job within the industry or within government and so a high energy proactive rather than just mucking time until their career is finished (Interview 28, firm).

Numerous CEOs of trade associations in the aerospace and defence industries until the early decades of the 20th century were formal military staff and civil servants, or staff appointed directly by the government (Turner 1988). These features limited the development of structured and sophisticated political strategy because interactions would be solely established on a relational level as managers would have existing contacts with officials and policy-makers. Frequently, interactions would be extremely limited in scope as emphasised by a trade association CEO:

> Everyone prior to me since the end of the war was actually a retired air force officer because the industry up to that time was viewed as largely supporting the defence industry, needs, government requirements, but that had changed, so that by the time I came along, the members, the companies that support the trade association, who funded it, decided they wanted someone from industry not from the MoD or a former officer because they wanted this broader look, someone familiar with business, familiar with the civil sector which had grown so much and so on. Hence, that is why I came into it. When I arrived I found that it did do government lobbying, in the sense that it is generally understood, but it was rather confined to military issues and really hadn't focused too much on the civil sector and that clearly had to change (Interview 21, trade association).

Hence, the interactions with government relied on personal relationships rather than through the development of systematically organised political strategies defined by the collective membership. This inertial approach was detrimental in several ways. Firstly, the trade associations would not develop systematic and continuous political strategy that included proactive actions but would solely rely on reacting to external events. Secondly, the organisations were unable to forge relationships and develop a broader network in the socio-political arenas. Thirdly, the associations were used as policy instruments by the government (Turner 1988), as acknowledged by a firm Head of Government Relations who argued that associations are vital instruments for the government to interact with industry (Interview 27, firm).

Lawton, Rajwani, and Doh (2013) argue, in their study on airlines and the deregulatory context, that airline ownership structure influences the approach to corporate political activity, using the dynamic capabilities lens. The authors, stress that state owned enterprises are less able to develop political capabilities because of resource constraints, and because of their ownership structure, as they "did not have to go far to lobby" (2013: 238-239). Whilst agreeing with the scholars, the findings suggest that the institutional embeddedness perspective is advantageous in highlighting the difficulty and/or inability of organisations that have close links with institutional actors to develop efficient political activities. It is undeniable that political ties are distinct to outright ownership, nevertheless, the results underline that organisations' dependence on institutional entities, manifested through CEOs political ties, developed through their professional background working in military and governmental spheres or direct appointment, may be detrimental to the development of political strategy. Moreover, the findings partially answer their question "If governments impede the way political capabilities are developed, should firms move more toward non-state ownership structures?" (Lawton, Rajwani, and Doh 2013: 239). Again, whilst this research adopts a different theoretical perspective, it is able to demonstrate that organisations (in this case trade associations), benefit in terms of developing more sophisticated and structured political activities, by securing a greater distance and independence from institutional actors. A former trade association executive commented on how the inadequate political activities forced the companies to act independently and weakened the position of the organisation as a credible intermediary:

> I would say that the political impact was minimal, it was really down to the companies to look after themselves, and of course this reflected on the characters that run it (Interview 20, trade association).

Moreover, the role of the CEO is relevant in small and large trade associations. In relation to the first, even though larger trade associations have structured decision-making processes including boards of directors, executive teams and numerous committees, CEOs appear to have a determining role in the definition of objectives and priorities. In relation to the latter, small organisations will not have the necessary resources to establish external affairs or government affairs departments, thus the political activities may be entirely defined and undertaken by the CEO as confirmed by regional trade association representatives:

> We have personal networks, […] our CEO, he has a very, very extensive network, so he knows a lot of people in BEIS and a lot of people in the primes, and he'll engage with them when he is at the various…they create various working groups and networking type of opportunities where if he is going for dinner somewhere in London the chap from BEIS will be there, and somebody from the Welsh devolved administration will be there and he'll have a chat, and he'll do it in a very kind of soft way (Interview 18, trade association).

On the other hand, the same trade association representative mentioned how the sole reliance of the trade association on the CEO could ultimately have negative repercussions on the entire organisation, particularly on its political role and influencing functions:

> Our fundamental weakness is our CEO because we rely so much on his personal relationships, he is our weakness because without the personal relationships the [trade association] doesn't really work, so we identify this as a problem, but we don't have a solution yet (Interview 18, trade association).

Hence, the reliance on one individual to design and undertake all political activities is common amongst the regional trade associations, exposing them to negative outcomes, which the larger trade associations are generally in a better position to supersede thanks to their more formalised decision-making structure. Nevertheless, even within large organisation key actors, for example in the executive team or board of directors, will possess strong political ties with politicians and civil servants, which will in several cases,

be impossible to replicate once the trade association's representative has left the organisation. It will be then very difficult for the organisation to rebuild those connections in the short term (Interview 26, industry expert).

The CEO can be thus considered as a key resource for trade association towards developing political activities; nonetheless, there are other resources that are key towards formulating political strategy. Following the role of trade associations in developing information, data, statistics of the industry they represent, a key resource is having in-house personnel that can develop such knowledge. This is vital for all trade associations, but mostly for those that undertake a strong political and influencing function, as they will need the information to inform policymakers. This notion is well evidenced in the following of excerpt from an interview with the former managing director of a leading trade association:

> And one of the first things I decided even before I joined, I was appointed but hadn't started, it was that it needed some research because there was no information no data, and as you would know very well yourself, if you go and persuade anybody but a government certainly of a case that you are putting but have no information, no statistics, you can't say what we are worth economically and so on and so forth, really you have no case. And so that research had to be started, and that is why […] came because I wanted him to lead a group that would do that work, and indeed they did and it was very successful and they began to produce information every year on the industry, so you could go along to government ministers, members of parliament, to anybody and say look this is the industry, here are the facts and figures, here are the statistics, it does this, it does that, and gradually those numbers become the accepted numbers. In the end if you are successful with this process everybody says these are the numbers…and they are your numbers. So that is a very important part of any kind of lobbying process. If you like grab the ground of the information, so we did that and that was successful (Interview 21, trade association).

The structure and size of the trade association is extremely important, and as previously mentioned the UK aerospace comprises small and larger trade associations. Larger trade associations will have a greater availability of human, organisational and financial resources.

As underlined for individual firms (Figure 9 above), the capacity of an organisation operating in the political environment to establish a physical presence close to policymakers is a key resource. Various informants underlined that the closeness with government and government departments facilitated the communications between industry and political stakeholders. As evidenced by the former CEO of a trade association this was a feature that would enable the organisation, and still does today, to interact with elected politicians and civil servants in a very quick and comprehensive way:

> Because our offices are close to parliament, not far from Westminster, they were prepared to come up over lunch, have a sandwich and we will talk to you about this and that and we would gather a half a dozen of MPs on a particular issue they were interested in and we wanted to tell them our view on it (Interview 21, trade association).

As abovementioned trade association representatives organise tours for parliamentarians in which they take them around the country to visit firm sites and productions plants. In order to do so trade associations take advantage of firm resources and use them to develop and strengthen their relationships with key political actors. Trade associations would be also in charge of organising guided visits during important trade shows such as Farnborough air show.

5.3 At the heart of nonmarket strategy: shaping the institutional environment

The preceding section has focused on analysing the environment in which trade associations operate and on how internal attributes and environmental conditions may impact trade associations' role and formulation of political strategy. The following section will address how trade associations exert their influence. Specifically, it will delve into the political activities undertaken by the aerospace trade associations towards shaping the environment in which they operate, demonstrating that their activities are a combination of reactive and proactive approaches undertaken through a multitude of platforms and forums. The overarching theme of this chapter, which has emerged from the data, is that trade associations develop strong political ties and complex relationships and use other organisations and individuals to influence policy-makers and key institutional stakeholders. Building on Barley's (2010) argument that firms systematically build an institutional field to exert greater influence on policymakers, this study finds that

trade associations also build an institutional field to exert greater influence. These empirical contributions are conducive towards understanding how trade associations at different levels (i.e. national and regional) operate in the political arena and attempt to alter the institutional environment and the policy-making process.

5.3.1 Strategy execution

As mentioned in the previous section, trade associations differ in terms of size and structure, as well as in the functions they undertake. A trade association's decision to focus on market or nonmarket functions will be in line with the overarching aims and objectives, as well as in the interactions with firms and institutional actors. The triangulation of the interview data with the information gained through the organisations' websites and documentary literature highlights recurrent aims and objectives, which consistently with previous literature (e.g. Barnett 2013; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015) can be divided in two broad categories, namely internal and external oriented activities. Following the analysis of documentary sources, the internal activities can further be divided in business development, networking and information, whereas the external activities consist in lobbying, representing and influencing. Table 10 provides a summary of these main areas of activity.

Table 10: Trade associations' main areas of activity

Main areas of activity	Selected data from documentary sources
	Internally oriented aims and objectives
Business development	Business improvement and professional development services covering business, skills, innovation and technology Marketing and support services covering exhibitions, material and administration Offering a wide variety of high quality events The MAA team are available on an on-going basis to take specific queries, address issues on behalf of our members, and support you in developing aerospace market opportunities, identifying technology development partners and improving operational performance Supporting business development opportunities and UK manufacturing and our industries' supply chains Increasing Member value through a range of services Promotion of your company's products and services on our website, within our capabilities brochure and trade brochure and also in our monthly newsletter, e-shots to members, social media postings and at events and exhibitions Providing a brokering service to help members win new business

Networking	Developing funding sources for FAC and its members including membership services, consultancy and winning and managing Government projects/initiatives Connectivity and networking through member and business partnerships Bringing industry stakeholders together to provide one cohesive community Helping to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the supply chain Organised opportunities to network with colleagues from across the Midlands aerospace industry at regular MAA members meetings Networking opportunities with Aerospace Wales Forum members and other organisations at member forums and events. Being recognised by academia and research establishments as a key route to the aerospace and defence industry
Information	Regular industry updates about what's happening in the aerospace sector, along with discussions about relevant key issues. Helping SMEs understand the international and domestic market the industry Producing regular data on industry and reports on the issues that matter most to the UK's Aerospace industry. We share knowledge in order to improve the market and business support opportunities of members.
Externally oriented aims and objectives	
Representation/ Influence /Lobbying	Championing aerospace in the South West and one of the largest aerospace alliances in Europe Representing the interests of the South West aerospace community and able to influence key decision makers in industry, government and academia Providing a voice for SMEs to ensure effectiveness in the supply chain academia Representing and uniting companies and organisations involved in the aerospace sector supply chain. Influencing the policy debates of most importance to our industries and enhancing the profile of our industries Easy access to Welsh Government Ministers through our strong relationship with Welsh Government The Aerospace Wales Forum represents the views of its members and the wider aerospace sector at regional, national and international levels. It gives your organisation the opportunity to feed into Government policies that could affect your business. Being accepted by Government and the industry as the principal voice of SMEs in the aerospace and defence industries in the UK Establishing good communications with the media to promote the aerospace and defence industries. The MAA is very active in raising the profile of the industry and what it needs from government through its partnership with other aerospace clusters and our national body ADS, and in the MAA's meetings directly with: government ministers, Members of Parliament, other influential bodies

Source: Author's compilation from trade associations' websites and documentary sources.

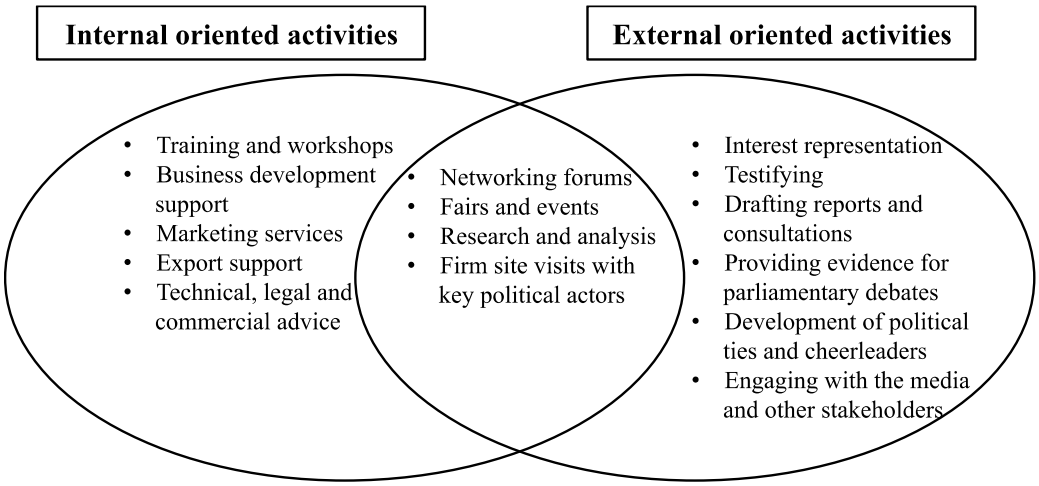
Notwithstanding the overall objective of this thesis, which is to explore the features peculiar to nonmarket strategy and operations in the socio-political arena, it may be useful to briefly consider some of the notions that emerged from the data concerning activities undertaken to assist members in the market environment. Trade associations provide an extensive array of services focused at helping firms operate in the market environment

and coherently with extant literature (e.g. Spillman 2012), several informants addressed these as "soft services" (Interview 20, trade association). These activities include the provision of training and education workshops, research and analysis of national and international market opportunities, assistance with product marketing, and further business development activities.

A common theme throughout the interviews concerned trade associations acting as facilitators, given that one of the main activities is that of industry coordination, which in this context is intended as facilitating the connections between different actors operating within the same economic context as well as with actors operating in socio-political environments. The informants reported diverging perceptions regarding the motives of small and large firms' involvement and engagement with each other: in terms of the larger organisations, to maintain a connection with the supply chain, whereas in terms of the smaller firms to gain information and find business opportunities. Trade associations are able to undertake these functions in different ways. They will organise networking events and seminars or communicate with their members through the development of specific search engines on their websites, as well as through the distribution of magazines, blogs and newsletters. In relation to intra-industry connections, Battisti and Perry (2015) refer to this function as an indirect role of trade associations; in contrast Spillman argues that developing ties is a primary role and that "networking is a native concept in association subcultures" (2012: 123). The findings of this research build on the latter view as triangulation between association documentary sources and interviews and observations point to substantiate the notion that producing networking opportunities is a central function of aerospace associations in the UK.

It is noteworthy to underline that several functions specifically directed at facilitating firms' business development, overlap with activities directed at influencing the political environment. For example, the organisation of trade shows or events that are intended to showcase the industry's products and services, create networking platforms and boost sales and exports, generally produces the preconditions for the industry (i.e. individual companies as well as trade bodies) to interact with public officials, politicians and regulators. Figure 11 highlights the key activities and services directed at the market environment, activities directed at the nonmarket environment, and activities that may overlap between the two arenas.

Figure 11: Overlap of internal oriented and external oriented activities



Source: Elaborated by author

In terms of linking industry with political institutions, activities are intended to connect firms with various institutional players, including local and national government, as well as other public and quasi-public organisations. It is noteworthy to highlight that the need to relate with industry or political actors that operate within the same institutional field may stem from both sides. From the regulatory and policymaking side, decision-makers may want to relate with firms to gain specific information and expertise needed to develop policy and regulations (e.g. Beyers 2004; Hultén, Barron, and Bryson 2012; Taminiau and Wilts 2006), as well as influence the business environment (Bennett 1997b), and will require intermediaries to facilitate the interactions with industry players. For example at the regional level, informants underlined how local political representatives may want to get in touch with large companies but will not have the necessary connections or an established network and will thus rely on local trade associations to foster the relationship. A trade association representative commented:

> When we facilitate government to the primes it tends to be local government or UKTI representatives, because they may need a connection into a specific site […] and we will do a linking event, or chat or introduction or things like that. […] as far as the government wanting to talk to our members, […] we will organise an event where they can come and present whatever message that they are wanting to give directly to our members (Interview 18, trade association).

Furthermore, several informants suggested how government or other political actors would want to convey a specific message or strategy to the industry and would rely on trade bodies to communicate it to the companies (Interview 5, firm). Informants underlined that sector specific trade associations are particularly valuable organisations that can undertake this delicate role due to their strong connections and continuous relations with the industrial environment as well as their ability to communicate effectively with both large primes and with micro-firms.

In addition to internally oriented activities, trade associations undertake interest representation and political activity functions, which similarly to firms' involvement in the political arena, have as objective to influence public policy decisions (e.g. Bonardi, Holburn, and Vanden Bergh 2006). However, a crucial difference concerns the objective of the political action; whilst firms generally undertake political activities to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors, trade associations undertake political activities that favour an entire industry or sector depending on the membership they represent.

All the national and regional associations operating within the UK aerospace industry undertake some form of political activity, however there are contrasting views regarding the ability, effectiveness and need of regional trade associations to operate in the political arena. This is probably the apex of divergence between informants' perspectives on the political activities of sectoral trade associations operating at different levels in the UK aerospace industry. As mentioned in Chapter 3, regional and national trade associations collaborate in the "Aerospace and Defence Federation", to work collaboratively towards influencing the policymaking process. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether this is effective, as several informants questioned its benefits and highlighted competition amongst associations.

Greenwood (2002: 12) argues that "national associations are by nature political animals whose *raison d'être* is representation" and various informants underlined how the regional trade associations do not, or are not required to develop political activities, as was evidenced by a firm Head of Public Affairs:

> I think [national trade association] has a lobbying function, very clear, they have a team, they are experienced to contributing in

> consultations, in gathering evidence and to representing the industry. The regional bodies do not have this function. And they tend to focus more on supply chain improvement, so helping their members becoming more efficient (Interview 23, firm).

Various regional trade association representatives corroborated these notions and underlined that they would not undertake political activities at the national level, however they would undertake political activities at the regional level to influence local actors as emphasised by a regional trade association CEO:

> I have not been involved in any of the politician related stuff, so things like select committees…that would be getting into [the national trade association's] remit in terms of lobbying and influencing politicians. So I'd say we tend to let them do that on a national basis, we would have then meetings with local MPs on a regional basis with a regional strategy or initiative (Interview 15, trade association).

Another trade association representative underlined how in his opinion the organisation did not develop a structured and comprehensive political strategy and this had a clear impact on the political functions it would undertake, which were extremely limited. The association would rather concentrate on developing market-oriented activities as these were more visible, and valued by its membership (Interview 18, trade association). The political activity development would be limited to the CEO relating with key institutional stakeholders on an individual basis.

In juxtaposition, several informants argued that if the trade associations did not undertake political functions and have a strong voice in the political arena they would cease to be considered as a prominent actor within the aerospace industry. It is plausible to associate these perspectives to the strong period of economic and political uncertainty caused by Brexit. It has already been stressed that trade associations may shift between their business and political functions, but it is reasonable to assume that their political and interest representation orientation increases during highly uncertain times.

Moreover, several data sources pointed at regional bodies undertaking political functions. Firstly, as highlighted in Figure 11 (above) several regional associations include interest representation and lobbying functions in the list of core activities and services provided to members. Secondly, regional trade associations operating in environments characterised by the presence of strong local institutions will be incentivised to undertake

lobbying functions as they may enjoy closer relationships with institutional actors than the national organisations. As one interviewee said regarding their political activities:

> […] it is certainly liaising with sub-national elected officials, regional government or a city council. Obviously, they are closer to their businesses, so they are able to keep that more intimate relationship than the national organisation would. Let's say the recent discussions around Brexit and the Border in Northern Ireland. Now [regional trade association] would be a tremendous source of information because of the potential impact of what would be proposed up there, whereas a trade association based here in London might not have that local knowledge and local contacts who can inform people on the exact opinion of businesses in that part of the country. So much more intimate interaction with small and local members and with their regional elected officials (Interview 28, firm).

In line with the abovementioned argument concerning the role of the CEO, a strong involvement in the socio-political arena and the consequent development of nonmarket strategies by smaller associations may stem from the direction given by the CEO and his capability of developing political connections.

One of the main functions of trade associations' political activity that emerged from the data refers to developing a positive interaction between the industry and political stakeholders. This is evidenced by a pattern that emerged from the interviews, which referred to the notion that trade associations' ultimate political goal is to "put up the wallpaper" as argued by the former Head of Political and Economic Affairs of a leading trade association (Interview 20, trade association). The following quote stresses how the political functions of trade associations are intended to establish the necessary conditions for the industry to develop a strong interaction with government and other political actors on a general but continuous level. Consequently, firms would then be able to interact in relation to more specific issues:

> […] if you are doing anything you got to paste up the wallpaper first then you can stick stuff to the wallpaper, it is all about creating a mood, a context, then you can start being specific […] because the trade association is classic wallpaper (Interview 20, trade association).

This is a common theme, and the majority of informants agreed that individual firms' interaction with political stakeholders reaches deeper technical levels and goes into more

detail than the interactions developed by trade associations. Discussing this notion one informant with both trade association and firm experience, argued:

> [The trade association] will reinforce the same arguments again and again, whereas we can have more progressive discussions around what the impact will be on practical terms, where therefore do negotiations need to go beyond top-level messages like we want to maintain single market access. Well what does that actually mean, what does it look like in practice. There is a deeper level of interaction, which we can have at firm level, which a trade body couldn't probably have (Interview 29, firm).

A key part of trade associations' political activities is undertaken through the development of political ties and "relationships with key political actors, with the aim of persuading them to support policy and regulatory decisions" (Mbalyohere et al. 2017). Sun, Mellahi, and Wright capture this by stressing "since political institutions are among the most difficult environmental dependencies to control, firms may seek to co-opt political stakeholders by developing personal and organisational linkages so that potentially hostile elements of environmental uncertainties can be neutralised" (2012: 70-71).

The findings indicate that trade associations managers' political ties can be developed in several ways including asking parliamentarians to attend industry fairs, forums, specific workshops, gala dinners, annual conferences, organising events within parliament, and undertaking an entire set of activities by tapping into their member firm's assets and resources. For example, associations may organise tours of firm sites as well as organise roundtable discussions with senior industry leaders (e.g. Department for Exiting the European Union 2017), which will have two main objectives. On one side, they will be able to inform and educate policymakers on industry issues as well as showcase the main production sites and products. On the other side, they will have the opportunity to establish strong ties with key political stakeholders. The following excerpt of an interview with a member of the board of directors of a leading trade association is particularly revealing and clearly demonstrates the level of deep personal interaction that is developed to cultivate strong connections with policymakers:

> We have created a tour that we take officials, and ministers on, advisors on, out in Filton to see GKN, Rolls Royce and Airbus. And if they have the full day you can do the full visit…nice and

> relaxed…and we go with them. So, whether it is special advisors[60], or officials and we are doing it for a minister now…we go out on the train with them, spending time, getting to know the person. We are not doing the hard kind of…here is this issue, here is the next issue…it's more like…where in London do you live…it's getting to know people and then you are on the visit, and then you have that kind of follow up conversation, and they just become familiar and comfortable with you. You get to see industry…you get to introduce them to industry in a nice and easy way. […] we invite them to receptions, we invite them to Farnborough, we invite them to trade shows, our annual dinner…and it's ways to get to know them, brief them and then hopefully get them interested and engaged in your issues (Interview 19, trade association).

Moreover, trade associations are able to develop political ties and establish relationships with political stakeholders through the provision of information. The findings suggest various phases of this particular strategy: a first phase in which the organisation will develop broad industry information and intelligence and provide this to MPs and other political actors during receptions in parliament, APPGs, and other events. The second phase consists in providing politicians with specific information and reports that can be used by them during debates and other parliamentary activities. A former trade association Government Affairs Manager commented:

> You need to provide them with one, the initial evidence which gets them interested, which is all around constituency investment, employment, then extrapolate that nationally. Then they will start to come to you or will be receptive to receive from you speaking points, evidence for debates (Interview 29, firm).

Even though large firms interact independently with government, trade associations may build and cultivate political ties in ways that individual firms are not able to because as previously mentioned, government officials in the UK will generally want to engage with organisations representing an entire industry rather than interact with firms individually. A firm Senior VP and Head of Government Affairs underlined the key role that trade associations play in term of fostering relationships:

[60] Special Advisors, often referred to as SPADs, are counsellors to the Prime Minister and to senior ministers. They are extremely important political actors as they are appointed directly by the ministers, and frequently are in line to senior political office positions (Dorey 2014).

> The trade association may have contact with certain parts of the government we don't have. We employ them primarily to be a political government relations unit, so they have maybe a bit more time to make many more contacts than we do (Interview 22, firm).

Industry experts corroborated these notions and argued that trade associations' relations and contacts within government and the civil service could help the industry convey a particular message better than firms' development of comprehensive political strategies (Interview 26, industry expert).

Additionally, various informants proposed the view that in specific circumstances (e.g. in the context of government change or ministerial reshuffles) trade associations are able to gain easier access, as one informant reported:

> Associations will have an easier time because they represent a sector or a range of companies they can sometimes get easier and more ready access in the context of political changes. Whereas individual firms may have to wait for that access because they are just presenting one perspective rather than many, that said I think individual companies can beyond that react more quickly to particular issues because you are not relying on achieving consensus across a range of members, its internal decisions. So I can provide a view on Brexit very readily whereas [the trade association] will take time to come up with a position and will usually not move beyond that position (Interview 29, firm).

The previous quote is interesting as it highlights a crucial difference between firms' and trade associations' political activities, underlining the limits of the latter. Differently from trade bodies, individual companies can react quicker to issues in the political arena, as they are not bound to acquire consensus amongst various members.

Furthermore, similarly to individual companies' political activities, trade associations may choose to conduct a highly visible political campaign by developing comprehensive media and social media campaigns, whereas in other cases trade associations will want to operate silently behind closed doors as suggested by an informant with extensive trade association experience:

> The trade association didn't make a noise externally, but it worked privately with the members and the government and it allowed a couple of the larger companies […] to speak about the impact […] directly. So sometimes it wants to be in front,

> sometimes it wants to be behind, and it depends on the situation (Interview 29, firm).

Various informants from the three categories (i.e. trade association, firm and industry expert) argued that interacting with the media was a crucial part of their political activities. The findings show that trade associations interact with the media to react to information that might damage the industry, but more importantly to convey messages and support the development of a particular narrative. An informant who collaborated extensively in the development of the national trade association's political strategy commented:

> The interactions with the media are developed through fostering continuous and "off the record" relationships with journalists and editors. It is important to develop a dialogue, specifically when it's about handling sensitive news (Interview 5, firm).

Nevertheless, another informant cautioned the use of the media, as an improper use could negatively impact the relationship with political stakeholders, as can be grasped by the following interview quote:

> […] not using the press to lobby ministers, they hate that. Having the conversations in private (Interview 19, trade association).

5.3.2 Platforms and forums for engagement

A fundamental feature of trade association's political activities is the combination of reactive and proactive activities. In line with scholars (e.g. Oliver and Holzinger 2008) who argue that these two approaches should be considered as complementary, the findings across the different organisations suggest that trade associations combine the two approaches depending on the specific issues they face.

The two perspectives (i.e. reactive and proactive) have been considered as two extremes linked to different theoretical paradigms and analysed accordingly. The first paradigm is linked to institutional theories, which focus on institutional characteristics and how organisations are influenced by these (e.g. Geels 2014). The latter, mainly to resource-based theories that focus on internal organisational features and how organisations can proactively make use of their resources and develop capabilities to influence the decision-making process (e.g. Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013). Nevertheless, in response to one of the main criticisms that has been postulated to institutional theory, namely that it

only considers the "reactive" perspective, Scott (2008) proposes the notion that it may be an appropriate lens to consider business actors' activities towards shaping their institutional environment. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Weidenbaum (1980) argues there are three main approaches in the interactions with public policy: passive reaction, positive anticipation and proactive public policy shaping. Several respondents confirmed that trade associations' political strategy is a combination of both reactive and proactive activities and the findings suggest that trade associations will attempt to develop a combination of approaches.

Nevertheless, it is inevitable that trade associations that demonstrate a higher knowledge of the political arena and mechanisms, are accustomed to developing formal and structured political strategies, and enjoy stronger relations with policymakers may be better positioned to develop proactive measures. In contrast, trade associations that do not have a strong political function will find it more difficult to anticipate and proactively influence policy development. Organisations with structured political strategies will undertake various activities that will enable them to anticipate decisions that will influence the business environment. Efficient political activity monitoring activities will allow trade associations to capture signals relating to a particular policy development, as will having organisational representatives specifically designated to be regularly involved in activities with MPs (Interview 12, trade association). Another measure involves establishing consultation meetings and roundtables with institutional stakeholders. These notions are clearly highlighted by a senior trade association representative:

> So we will try to do a bit of thought leadership, policy document, some sort of publication and take that to government, and to say you need to do x. because we think that the policy isn't working, the current policy isn't working for these reasons, and here is a practical solution to change it, and here is how much it is going to cost and that type of thing. And so it is very much proactive (Interview 19, trade association).

Concurrently, the institutional consultation mechanisms, i.e. how policymakers decide to interact with business actors, will have a strong impact on the activities undertaken by trade associations. Government and government departments may actively require feedback on policy or legislative proposals to ensure that they have the necessary information towards the formation of specific policy. The government will establish a

consulting process through the organisation of workshops with industry players or by producing green papers to which invested actors will respond to (Dorey 2014). In these cases, trade associations and other organisations will have to react to specific proposals advanced by the government and engage in the debate if they want to have a voice and advance specific messages. However, a senior government affairs manager commented that in this case organisations would have minimal opportunities to influence public decisions through a response and would need to anticipate it given the different stages of UK policymaking:

> […] so this is where public policy or ideas from government itself can force business to change, but we obviously don't like that. If something has gone on a green paper or white paper it is almost too late. Our job is to know what is even a tiny little brain thought into somebody's mind, to say please think about aerospace before you go charging ahead with this policy. And this is what [the trade association] needs to be good at (Interview 22, firm).

Hence, for trade associations to be effective, they need to operate in the early stages of the policymaking process, and as abovementioned the development of relationships and constant interaction with policymakers is particularly relevant.

Another aspect that is closely linked to developing strong political ties and to the platforms through which trade associations exert their influence, relates to cooperating or using other actors and entities that operate within the same economic, political and social environments. These can be considered as indirect activities, namely the activities that are not directly targeted at decision and policymakers but are rather directed at a broader audience. Often, the reason behind these strategies is to develop a narrative on broad issues and to amplify a particular message. Targeting journalists, industry experts or political analysts in order to convey messages and develop a broader interest around a specific topic is a clear example of such activities.

Hence, building on Barley's (2010) argument that firms systematically build an institutional field to exert greater influence on policymakers, this study provides empirical evidence that also trade associations build an institutional field to exert greater influence. Trade associations in the UK aerospace industry develop special relationships with individuals, organisations and other trade associations, often operating in different

sectors. This is particularly common when several industries face similar issues. In the UK, a clear example is proposed by the relationships between the aerospace associations and the automotive associations. As one informant put it:

> We didn't see him at all [the business secretary], we didn't talk to him, yet we got more money, and it's because […] it's others campaigning on our behalf that helped achieve that outcome (Interview 19, trade association).

From the previous quote, it is evident that, even if in an implicit way, there is a positive collaboration between different organisations. This collaboration is acknowledged between the two parties and in turn can foster respective benefits. However, building an institutional field is not always based on collaborations that are acknowledged and accepted by the different organisations. It is common that these influencing strategies are not based on mutual collaborative understandings; they are rather the outcome of a specific political tactic developed by a trade association. In this instance, the trade association may exploit other trade associations:

> I use them, I don't mind them existing and having those people [policy and external affairs managers] because I will use those organisations…similarly as I said at the beginning a big company might use [a trade association] to push a line that they don't want to say, or to echo something, I use them [other trade associations] to push lines (Interview 19, trade association).

Occasionally, trade associations will not be able to canvass direct support from other trade associations as they might have confrontational relationships and act competitively. Hence, in this circumstance an indirect activity that may be employed is having the trade association's members lobby other organisations on its behalf. This is relevant when a sectorial trade association is not particularly strong in a given geographical area and has limited ties with local politicians. Another type of organisation that trade associations' tap into in order to convey and amplify their messages are trade unions. The former Head of Policy of a large trade association highlighted how during the period in which the Labour party was in government, trade unions had very strong connections with leading officials and could help the trade association convey its messages:

> We need to reach out to the trade unions, because they are going to have an entrée far better than ours into the labour party, and

> usually we are on the same side. They want stable, well-funded industry (Interview 20, trade association).

Within the political arena, trade associations are able to develop relationships with politicians that do not have to be directly involved in the policymaking process, and as previously mentioned these can be instrumental in supporting specific cases. Moreover, as mentioned by several senior trade association managers, in terms of the organisation's political success, it is key to convert these individuals and organisations into entities that support the industry's interests. Informants referred to these as "cheerleaders" (e.g. Interview 22, trade association). Hence, trade associations organise events in parliament with the help of parliamentarians who will act as sponsors to the events. This is an effective and low-cost form of lobbying, which will attract other MPs. Moreover, sponsor MPs will be highly influential at conveying specific messages to other MPs who are not accessible to trade associations or are acting against industry interests, as mentioned by a trade association representative:

> You can have an influential backbench MP, or the MPs that are criticising the defence industry…we will never change their mind…I will never change their mind, [the CEO] will never change their mind, but they might listen to an MP that they know and trust…who is that MP? How do we get them on side? And how do we engage them all in a bigger…more constructive conversation? (Interview 24, trade association).

Additionally, as previously mentioned, trade associations will convey messages through the media as evidenced by the numerous appearances on national and international media networks. Nevertheless, this is another situation in which larger trade associations will have the necessary human and economic resources to develop a strong and influential presence as underlined by a trade association CEO:

> This is an interrelated world and we all react to what is on the news, whether it's on a newspaper, television, the internet and therefore you want your messages, the right messages to be in those environments and find the opportunity to put them across. So, we would always be available for comments, we would have somebody we would have a press office and we had somebody, we would train ourselves, I was trained as well, and I could go on television or on radio whatever to make the comment on whatever might be the issue and occasionally you know pressed to do so. So of course, those are other areas and other places where you see

> to exert influence, introduce your message. (Interview 21, trade association)

There are a variety of reasons behind trade associations using other organisations to push particular interests. The first and very practical reason relates to timing. Time is a very important factor within the context of effective business-government relations, particularly if a new government has been elected or if new policy is 'about to get passed'. An example relates to the AGP collaborative project between the industry and government. In 2015 after the general election, the aerospace trade associations needed to make sure that the government remained committed to this collaboration within the context of the spending review. However, the associations did not have the opportunity to talk with the new business secretary and cooperated with the leaders of other organisations such as the CBI and the EEF who lobbied specifically for the conservation of the support to the AGP and the aerospace sector (Interview 19, trade association).

As abovementioned trade associations undertake several activities that overlap between the market and nonmarket environments, such as the organisation of trade fairs. Government officials, ministers, senior civil servants and regulators will generally attend these events, and in particular instances participate actively. Trade associations endeavour to have key government officials attend these events in order to demonstrate that the industry has the government's full support. The prime minister or other minsters representing relevant departments (e.g. BEIS, MOD, Department for Transport), will be invited to give keynote speeches, and will then be given VIP tours of the fair, and taken to company stands. Companies may do so independently as well, however, institutional representatives will prefer that intermediaries undertake these functions as not to be considered preferring or supporting specific companies. Hence, in these events there are abundant opportunities to network with institutional players, as evidenced on the website of one of the most important fairs in the world:

> This prestigious reception provides an ideal setting to informally meet with key decision makers, make referrals and exchange business leads at the very start of the busy Farnborough week. (Farnborough International 2016)

Together the findings are significant in at least two major respects. Firstly, the notion that only large trade associations play an important political function may apply to specific

contexts but cannot be generalised. Undoubtedly, larger associations will have more access to politicians and legislators, but regional bodies may play an important role as well in their specific operational arenas. Secondly, the notion that even large trade associations may play a marginal role in relation to developing a robust political strategy if political activities are not a central part of their remit.

5.4 Summary

In line with the argumentations that trade association are to be considered key political actors (e.g. Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Traxler and Huemer 2007) this chapter has presented findings that support these views and offered an in-depth account of the political role and functions of trade associations in a specific context.

The first section has underlined three main patterns linked to trade associations' environment. Namely, why firms engage with trade associations and rely on these organisations to act as intermediaries and represent their interests. Additionally, the key institutional and organisational stakeholders, and their relationships have been highlighted, as well as aspects related to the political framework, institutional change and what can be considered as institutional gaps. Finally, the section has examined the drivers that influence trade associations' political strategy. The main contribution of this section has been the conceptualization of trade associations' embeddedness within their institutional environment and how this may impact the development of political activities, intermediary role and ability to operate in the political arena and influence the policy-making process.

The second section has focused on the nonmarket activities undertaken by trade associations. Specifically, it delved into the political activities undertaken by trade associations towards shaping the environment in which they operate. Moreover, it has highlighted the platforms and forums used by the trade associations and demonstrated that their activities are a combination of reactive and proactive approaches. The overarching theme of this section, which has emerged from the data, is that trade associations develop strong political ties and complex relationships and use other organisations and individuals to influence policy-makers and key institutional stakeholders.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This study explores the complex and dynamic field of business-government relations in the UK aerospace industry. Specifically, it investigates the political role and functions of a particular form of meta-organisation such as trade associations (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005), in a highly politicised context. Given that trade associations are considered as one of the main avenues through which companies undertake collective political activities (e.g. Barnett 2006a; 2013) as well as key agents in influencing regulation and government policy (Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015), this research focuses on developing knowledge on what influences the political role of trade associations, as well as on how they develop political activities and attempt to influence and shape their political environment. This is done by exploring two levels of analysis: national and regional sectorial trade associations. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the UK political and economic environment and the aerospace industry are an appropriate context to explore the political role and activities of trade associations operating within it. Moreover, the trade association framework in the UK is a particularly suitable milieu given the voluntary system and fragmented collective activity arrangement (e.g. Bennett 1999; Bennett and Payne 2000).

The following sections extend the narrative presented in the previous chapter, addresses the gaps in knowledge highlighted in Chapter 2, and discusses how the empirical findings relate to extant literature on corporate political activity and nonmarket strategy, contributing to their development. Moreover, this chapter underlines how this research embraces a multi-theoretical approach, which is developed by integrating insights from institutional and resource-based perspectives, and how these two lenses relate to the findings. Specifically, on one hand the institutional lens is helpful to highlight that organisations' political actions are influenced by their institutional embeddedness, and to explore how social structures and relationships impact their nonmarket strategy. On the other hand, the resource-based theoretical perspective is beneficial to emphasise that trade associations' nonmarket strategy development and execution is characterised by the deployment and bundling of internal and external resources.

The chapter is structured according to the three research questions advanced in the previous chapters of this study, which are:

- **RQ1: What are the determinants of trade associations' political role?**
- **RQ2: How is political strategy defined and exercised in trade associations?**
- **RQ3: How do trade associations exert their influence?**

6.2 Unravelling trade associations' political role

The first question advanced within this study addresses the gap identified in the literature, which relates to the need to better understand the precise role of trade associations at the interface of business and society (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Wilts and Meyer 2005). Specifically, this exploratory research contributes to the debate on understanding how trade associations play a political role and attempt to "influence the institutional field to affect government decisions and actions" (Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015: 228), by highlighting key factors that impact a trade association's political role. This inquiry's rationale builds on research that argues that existing work on trade associations has focused on the "nature and consequences" rather than on the "causes of industry's associations political activities" (Drope and Hansen 2009: 305). This section addresses the first research question:

- **RQ1: What are the determinants of trade associations' political role?**

The findings of this study are consistent with recent research (e.g. Berkowitz and Bor 2017; Barnett 2017; Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017) in proposing that trade associations are undoubtedly to be considered as key agents within the intricate business-government context. However, when unpicking the complexities concerning this specific organisational actor, it can be underlined that there are considerable differences amongst sectoral trade associations, at both national and regional level, concerning their political role.

Overall, trade associations in the aerospace industry are exceptionally important organisations for both businesses and political institutions. This can be assumed even though peak or cross-industry organisations dominate the intermediary environment in

terms of the size of their membership, organisational resources, and ability to represent broader domains (Eising 2007). Sectorial bodies are able to emerge as a result of their expertise and knowledge of the industry as well as through a closer proximity to the specific interests of business actors (Beyers 2004). These features enable sectoral bodies to address matters particular to firms operating in the aerospace industry; and whilst this may be valid for sectoral trade bodies in other industries, the complexity of the aerospace industry, its closeness with government as well as its political sensitivity might be additional factors that contribute to the intensification of their political role. Several informants emphasised how in the current condition, i.e. Brexit and the need for policymakers to acquire information and expertise from industry actors, sectorial trade bodies are more effective at conveying their interests and are able to engage at a deeper level than peak and cross-industry associations.

The overarching notion brought forward in this study is that all sectorial trade bodies, both at national and regional level may potentially undertake a political role, however there are certain features that enable or constrain their ability to be policy capable (Galambos 1988). These notions are supported by the collected data as participants underlined the general importance of sectoral associations as well as their inconsistent ability to operate in the political arena.

Previous research (e.g. Galambos 1988; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Van Waarden 1992) grouped trade associations in categories based on their size and functions they undertake. In terms of their functions, the main distinction relates to their internal engagement (i.e. with their membership) and external engagement (i.e. with socio-political actors and the policy-making process). In these categorisations, associations belonging to the first category tend to focus on internal industry activities mainly directed at structuring that particular industry, whereas associations belonging to the second category tend to focus on the external environment and in shaping institutional norms and behaviour. Moreover, extant work has highlighted that larger trade associations will generally act as a representative body in the political arena, and given the larger availability of resources, will potentially be able to influence, or at least take part in the policy-making process more effectively than smaller organisations (Barley 2010; Boléat 2003).

Whilst it is not this study's objective to dispute these arguments, they seem to provide a static representation that does not grasp the subtle complexities regarding these organisations and how endogenous and exogenous features may influence their 'volatile' role within the business-government interaction. Instead, the findings of this study, propose that trade associations' categorisations should be considered as highly fluid and that internal attributes and environmental characteristics might potentially alter the organisation's political role and position within the intermediary field (Bell 1995). In this light, trade associations must be considered as extremely intricate organisations that operate in highly complex and dynamic environments (Oliver and Holzinger 2008), which will impact their ability to operate successfully in the political arena. Consequently, this argumentation proposes the counterintuitive interpretation that large trade associations who generally enjoy strong and close relations with political and regulatory actors and have the potential to contribute significantly to policy-making, may in given circumstances play a minor political role. Concurrently, small trade associations with extremely limited resources may in specific contextual conditions, act as key actors in interacting with, and shaping their specific political environment. For example, trade associations operating in an environment characterised by the presence of a strong form of political and economic authority such as a devolved administration, which manage to secure a strong relationship with local policy-makers.

These notions challenge the resource-based assumptions that political action and operations in the nonmarket arena are especially dependent on the political resources that organisations possess. Instead the findings, in line with extant studies in the management domain (e.g. Oliver 1997), lend weight to the joint consideration of the resource-based lens and institutional perspectives by acknowledging the importance of organisations' specific resources without neglecting the paramount role played by the institutional and policy framework.

A beneficial starting point towards understanding trade associations' political role - assuming that trade organisations' functions follow on the reasons firms join them (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017) - concerns the motives that drive firms to join trade associations. Previous work has highlighted different factors, including having their interests represented in socio-political and economic arenas, influencing political decision making, networking, acquiring market and nonmarket information and

intelligence, taking part in collective bargaining, gaining external resources and having access to a broad range of business services (e.g. Barnett 2017; Bennett and Ramsden 2007; Bennett and Robson 2001; Jacomet 2005; Wilts and Meyer 2005). Nevertheless, Baron's (2016) recent work underlines that there is still the need to understand when organisations decide to delegate nonmarket action to an external organisation and/or when it should act individually.

The findings of this study are consistent with extant research and as evidenced, firms join for a variety of different reasons, which vary consistently, and frequently in relation to members' size. Findings concur with scholars (e.g. Barron 2013; Hillman and Hitt 1999; Taminiau and Wilts 2006) who suggest that firms generally join because of a lack of resources, which hinders them to influence political institutions that have an impact on their operations, and thus resort to external organisations that can represent their interests in the appropriate arenas. Moreover, in addition to interactions with policy-makers, firms (particularly smaller firms) seek trade associations' assistance towards furthering their business operations. This is done through a whole breadth of services provided by trade associations, including the provision of information on market opportunities, the organisation of trade fairs and workshops as well as the ability to create networking opportunities with other firms, institutional actors and other key stakeholders.

Similarly, large firms join for market and nonmarket reasons as well. These however, differ consistently from small firms' intentions and are possibly guided more towards the latter. In terms of nonmarket action, large firms generally have the necessary capabilities to interact with, and influence policy-makers directly, or at least decide when to act independently or in collaboration with other firms (Jacomet 2005). Nevertheless, there are instances whereby large firms need to undertake political activities and pursue certain agendas through trade associations, and findings suggest that these are mainly to gain access to political arenas and to convey particularly sensitive messages that companies do not want their organisation to be directly associated with. The latter factor was considered extremely relevant in the current political discourse dominated by Brexit and was widely shared within informants' answers. Moreover, trade associations may secure political intelligence and access to the political arena that individual firms, regardless of size, resources and political capabilities, are not able to gather independently.

Finally, with regards to small firms, regional associations may be considered as key actors, as they are perceived to being closer to their businesses and able to develop more intimate relationships. In relation to the relations between the industry's large firms and regional trade associations, the findings underlined contrasting views. On one hand, informants perceived them as not particularly significant entities, whereas on the other hand, informants presented them as crucial actors that foster the establishment of strong aerospace clusters that will in turn assist the development of their supply chains.

Hence, even though trade associations' *raison d'être* and stated purpose is to represent collective interests and operate in the political arena (e.g. Bennett and Ramsden 2007; Greenwood 2002), a large share of the reasons for which firms are perceived to join, depart substantially from this specific area of activity. This is particularly evident in respect to the perceived motives regarding small firms and is consistent with extant work (e.g. Bennett 2000; Battisti and Perry 2015; Dixon 2006). The findings suggest that small firms are generally guided by short term objectives and mostly seek market-oriented assistance, whereas large firms seem to be guided by the willingness to shape the political environment, which is perceived as a long-term objective. These notions are in line with Battisti and Perry (2015) who argue that trade associations' diverse services offered to firms are potentially linked to different organisational priorities. This contraposition of interests inevitably creates tensions within trade associations and ultimately generates contrasting internal pressures regarding the role and priorities that these organisations should undertake. These results reflect those of Bennett (1998) who posited that associations with differing member sizes would encounter greater issues when formulating a common strategy. Nonetheless, it must be mentioned that in contraposition to the perception of firms' motives, all trade association senior managers but one, and firm representatives involved in trade associations' political strategy development stressed the importance of interest representation and lobbying activities. As previously mentioned the turbulent period and uncertainty stemming from Brexit might have been a factor that influenced the managers' positions.

The second insight in relation to trade associations' political role concerns the institutional environment in which they operate. The collected data presented evidence on the perceptions firm and association managers, as well as industry experts have of the main political institutional stakeholders with whom trade associations interact and how

these impact on their political role. Previous research suggests that the political framework influences organisations' role and functions in the political field (e.g. Bennett 2000; Coleman and Grant 1985; Hillman 2003; Hillman and Wan 2005). The findings of this study extend these notions by underlining implications that particular features of the UK political environment have on the political role of sectorial trade associations. Specifically, these features are linked to themes that emerged in Chapter 5 and relate to the dominant role of central government, the presence of sub-national political governance bodies, and the dynamic nature of political institutions.

The first implication is that given that policy is largely developed at national level (e.g. Boléat 2003; Valler and Wood 2004), the prevalence of political action is directed towards the national government, departments and agencies. The result is that national associations will effectively have the necessary requirements and resources – e.g. dedicated staff in government affairs departments, as well as offices in central London in proximity to policy arenas and the ability to interact with key policymakers on a regular basis - to operate at this level and retain the leading political role amongst sectoral interest representation organisations in the aerospace industry. This feature has thus placed national trade associations as the potential key interlocutor and intermediary of the industry's interests amongst sectoral associations. The findings are thus consistent with previous research, which mentioned that "the system of business interest representation in Britain has largely paralleled the centralisation of economic, political, and state structures" (Valler and Wood 2004: 1839). Moreover, the findings are coherent with the argument that political activities should be directed at the "pivotal" political actors who have the strongest influence on the policy process in a given field (Henisz and Zelner 2012: 42).

Concurrently, however, the second implication concerns the transfer of authority and policymaking processes taking place in the UK and the role of local trade bodies, particularly with regards to regional associations operating in the devolved administrations. Participants underlined that these would potentially play a stronger political role than their equivalents in England, as they would enjoy a direct interaction with regional political institutions, which have the capacity to develop and implement regional strategies (refer to section 5.5.2). The capacity refers to the authority and ability that regional political institutions have towards developing regional policies, which other

areas do not have given the centralised approach to decision-making. Moreover, regional trade associations operating in the devolved administrations may benefit from a direct interface with the national government through their interactions with the specific territorial secretary of state for the devolved administration (Cabinet Office 2013). As previously mentioned these arguments should nonetheless keep in consideration the marked differences in aerospace presence across, and contributions to the various British regions. As evidenced, a stronger incidence of the aerospace industry in a specific context may result in a stronger interaction between business and political and regulatory actors.

The third implication regarding the political environment that was emphasised by participants as a determinant of trade associations' political role concerns changes in the political institutional environment. A common theme amongst interviewees was that changes in the environment required the change of the trade association. These changes can entail modifications in government following a general election, specific industrial policy and strategy decisions, as well as shifts in policy regarding regional economic development and devolution. Previous research has highlighted how institutional change affects the definition of trade associations' role and how supranational frameworks beyond the political spheres to which organisations are used to, ultimately influences their role and political activities (Wilts and Quittkat 2004). This study extends this strand of literature by highlighting how change in local governance systems has an impact on trade associations. These notions are observable in the case presented by regional trade associations operating in England. Changes in policy, i.e. the establishment of RDAs, firstly placed the regional bodies in a position of strength to play a political role, and subsequently to their abolishment narrowed their ability to effectively interact with policymakers and develop effective political strategies. These notions build on Bailey and Berkeley (2014: 1811) who argue that "RDAs were often better positioned to make judgements about how best to offer support and to which clusters (and/or sectors) as they had a superior information base than central governments". Hence, notwithstanding a trade association's willingness or capability to undertake a political role, the fact that it operates in an environment characterised by relatively independent political institutions will potentially enable it to develop some kind of interaction, whereas the absence of such entities will constrain its political functions.

The notion behind this argument is not that political institutions are absent such as in environments characterised by institutional voids (Khanna, Palepu, and Sinha 2005), but that the policymaking process, including key political actors are out of reach; in this specific case, policy is developed at the national level. Bennett (1995) argued that if government aspired to improve the effectiveness of local bodies it would have had to invest in institutional structures that could encourage collective action. Building on previous work (e.g. Medina 2016), this research argues that it is exactly the support that regional aerospace bodies obtained from the development of competent local governance systems that contributed to the development of their 'temporary' political role. Subsequently to their abolishment they shifted to proposing firm-specific services rather than focus on interest representation. In contrast, according to the data it appears that the regional bodies operating in the devolved administrations, which present stronger local political institutions, have retained a greater political presence. These findings broadly support the work of other studies, which posited that changes in the political system could influence the effectiveness of political activities (e.g. Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013), and additionally, go beyond this argument to suggest that changes could impact not only specific political tactics but also trade associations' broader role.

6.3 The formulation of political strategy

The second question advanced within this study addresses another gap identified in the literature, which concerns the under-investigated area of how trade associations define their agenda (e.g. Barnett 2017; Berkowitz and Bor 2017). The presented findings contribute to this gap by providing an in-depth and rich understanding of trade associations' political strategy determinants. Hence, this section will revisit the following research question:

- **RQ2: How is political strategy defined and exercised in trade associations?**

Several key themes emerged from the findings that offer an insight into trade associations' decision-making and political strategy formulation, and they can be mainly categorised in internal and external drivers.

In terms of internal features, previous research has determined that large firms have an influential role in steering trade associations' engagement with political and regulatory

actors (e.g. Barnett 2013; Guèguen 2002; Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017). This study provides additional evidence confirming the powerful role of the industry's large firms in defining trade associations' political agenda. Although some trade associations' top managers put forward the idea that their organisation would balance the interests of the wider membership, and that the presence of committees and advisory boards (in larger associations) would serve as balancing mechanisms, the majority of informants and the triangulation of different data sources suggested that large companies do indeed have a strong influence. Hence, even though extant research has advanced notions such as the "culture of consensus" (e.g. König, Schulte, and Enders 2012), as well as the "lack of hierarchy" (Berkowitz and Dumez 2015: 4) as meta-organisations' key characteristics, it is difficult to disregard the dominant role played by large firms.

Moreover, the findings indicate that consensus would be sought for in the latter stages of strategy development, as opposed to the initial and nascent stages that would be characterised by the influence of leading and powerful industry actors (refer to section 5.2.3). In other words, the key topics and chosen approaches to these would be put forward by large and dominant firms, and subsequently the trade associations would seek a compromise amongst the broader membership. This feature is possibly intensified by the structure of the aerospace industry, which is characterised by a limited number of extremely economically and politically powerful organisations (e.g. Hartley 2014; Hayward 1994). As underlined in Chapter 5, large aerospace companies, specifically top government suppliers, have strong interactions with national political institutions (e.g. procurement contracts with the MOD), which enable them to gain a position of strength, and they may consequently translate this power in the decision-making processes of sectorial trade bodies[61]. The data highlights that companies and particularly larger companies can be considered as key resources as they contribute to trade associations' physical and financial resources. For example, they may pay for special subscriptions, often be the main sponsors in specific projects and events, as well as contribute to the meta-organisations by seconding members of staff. These findings are in line with previous work (e.g. König, Schulte, and Enders 2012: 1325), which proposes that firm

[61] This dominant role could possibly be evident in peak and cross-industry associations as well; however, it is reasonable to assume that in this situation large aerospace firms would have to compete with other large and influential companies operating in different sectors.

members of meta-organisations usually enjoy a greater level or resources than the organisation itself.

One unanticipated finding concerns the differences that emerged amongst large members; specifically, between UK companies and foreign-owned companies based in the UK, with the latter perceived as playing a weaker internal influencing role and an overall minor involvement with associations than the first. The influence of leading organisations can be considered as a partial account of trade associations' political strategy development process, as the findings highlighted other key internal and external determinants.

Another internal determinant, which can be considered to be a key resource and thus supports the RBV perspective included within the emergent theoretical framework, relates to the role undertaken by individuals leading the associations. Even though this research is broadly in accordance with Spillman's scepticism (2012) on the true ability of trade associations' staff, to be fully autonomous from member firms and be able to independently develop long-term policies, the findings suggest that in the contemporary trade association arrangement in the UK aerospace sector, top level managers are key actors in the definition of the organisations' direction and political strategy (see section 5.2.3). These notions corroborate the findings of other studies that have investigated the centrality of managers in business-government relations and CPA, including CEO commitment (Griffin and Dunn 2004), government affairs managers' social capital (Barron, Pereda, Stacey 2017), managerial discretion (Hadani, Dahan, and Doh 2015), and MNC subsidiary executives' role (Blumentritt 2003). Moreover, this finding is in line with changes in the broader UK trade association context; namely, the shift of authority from committees within trade bodies, to a key role of the professional managing the organisation (Bolèat 1997; Macdonald 2001).

This notion is connected with the previous research question as the authority and discretion of the person in charge will not only have an impact on the formulation of the political strategy and specific tactics but also on the general orientation and role of the trade association, i.e. if it focuses on providing internal oriented services or external oriented activities such as lobbying and interest representation. As substantiated by information provided on their websites and/or through their promotional documents (Table 10) trade associations generally promote both kinds of activities, however various

participants underlined that trade associations CEOs usually tend to emphasise either one of the two as their core function and modify the organisation's objectives accordingly. These findings are in accordance with previous work (e.g. Blumentritt 2003; Hadani, Dahan, and Doh 2015), which emphasised the importance of managers' orientation towards political activities. This study discovers that the experience and professional background of the executive can be considered as key factors in trade associations' orientation. Informants argued that following a generalised shift from appointing CEOs with military or civil service backgrounds (particularly to national trade bodies), to appointing executives with extensive business background, the formulation of political strategies was perceived to have developed into more complex and multifaceted approaches. This may be another feature that is influenced by the external environment given the increasing political and regulatory pressure on business operations (Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2014), and the consequent necessity of organisations to adapt and innovate their political strategies.

Moreover, the role of the CEO was perceived to have particular prominence in regional trade associations. Whilst at both levels, i.e. national and regional, CEOs and senior representatives may undertake political activities as well as "develop unique insights about public policy" (Hadani, Dahan, and Doh 2015: 2), such as interacting with the media, giving evidence through oral testimony, and establishing political ties with key public officials, national associations generally have a number of employees who assume these functions as well. In contrast, within regional bodies, political activities are predominantly developed and undertaken by the executive managing the association.

In terms of external determinants, similarly to the effect on the broader political role, the structure of the UK political environment was perceived to have a strong impact on the development of specific political strategies as well, as underlined in the following paragraph. Hence, the findings are consistent with previous research, which has drawn on institutional theories to stress that the structure of the institutional context and institutional conditions in a particular country may define organisations' approach to operating in the nonmarket environment (e.g. Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2012; Hillman 2003; Hillman and Wan 2005).

One of the most recurring features concerns the necessity of trade associations to "tap into" government's agenda. Findings suggest that when developing political strategies trade associations consider governments' priorities, and attempt to align their strategy to these, endeavouring to establish a collaborative interaction. Interestingly, participants highlighted how the industry's requests would always be similar (e.g. appeal for additional funding, R&D incentives, tax cuts, as well as export assistance and a favourable policy environment), but they would try and modify and adjust their requests according to government objectives and strategy.

There are several motives that may explain this approach. The first concerns the dependency that the aerospace industry has on political institutions, for example in terms of military procurement contracts, R&D funding, tax credits and export support (Hartley 2014). The second motive relates to a key difference between firms' and trade associations' political activity and particularly in relation to the interactions with policymakers; companies are able to pressure policy-makers by leveraging their contributions to the socio-political and economic environment (e.g. employment and investments). Even though companies do attempt to adjust their activities to conform to "external expectations" and align with the external environment (Meznar and Nigh 1995: 976), if required they may undertake a more adversarial and confrontational approach as it will be extremely difficult for them to completely lose access to the political arena. In contraposition, trade associations do not provide a specific 'tangible' contribution and are extremely dependent on institutional legitimacy (e.g. De Villa, Rajwani, and Lawton 2015), which will force them to establish continuous collaborative and constructive relationships if they want to be considered as a valuable intermediary organisations by policymakers.

Notwithstanding policymakers' need to obtain input in terms of industry expertise and intelligence to develop policy and a general positive level of interaction between the government and interest groups (Cowles 2001), the UK's pluralist tradition does not enable organisations to acquire a formalised place in the policymaking process and the government is ultimately able to bar these organisations from the political arena (Eising 2007). The result is that sectoral trade associations have to compete with a broad range of other organisations, within the same industry or in other industries, to have their voice

heard and towards fostering collaborative interactions with policymakers. These notions are in accordance and can be associated to individual firms' behaviour operating in pluralist political systems (Hillman and Wan 2005).

Informants agreed that trade associations' ability to operate in the political arena, and establish relationships is largely determined by how they are viewed by political actors. Legitimacy is thus one of the key determinants empowering meta-organisations to represent the industry's interests and enable them to be considered as credible intermediaries by policy-makers. There are several ways through which legitimacy is gained, and scholars have argued that key factors are the ability to truly represent large market shares as opposed to narrow and firm-specific interests (Boléat 2003) and conform to institutional rules and norms (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 1995). This study's findings suggest that the ability to match government's priorities and create a shared agenda could also be considered as a key method to gain institutional legitimacy. The consequence to this required collaborative engagement may produce an elevated sensitivity to changes in the political environment such as a change in government policy or outright government change following elections.

Previous studies have put forward the argument that trade associations protect and enhance the reputation of their affiliates (e.g. Barnett and Hoffman 2008; Tucker 2008). This study finds that trade associations' reputation and legitimacy independently from their members is critical to their ability to participate in the policymaking process. These features are in line with notions stemming from institutional theory as "conformity to social expectations contributes to organisational success and survival" (Oliver 1997: 699), and that an "organisation's survival and growth depend on acquiring legitimacy from institutional actors" (Mellahi et al. 2016: 151). Moreover, Scott (1987: 498) stresses "organisations conform because they are rewarded for doing so through increased legitimacy, resources and survival capabilities". Legitimacy is extremely relevant when considering trade associations because it is one of their main assets when operating in the political and social environment, particularly in contexts characterised by a pluralist approach (Hillman and Wan 2005). Being a legitimate intermediary is vital for associations, as this will allow them to act as a recognised intermediary and interlocutor operating at the interface of the political and business environments. Specifically, without this recognition, a particular trade body may not be included in official platforms

established to foster engagement with politicians (e.g. structured meetings between government and industry), and as a consequence it may lose its influence on policymakers, the ability to convey the interests of its members and contribute to the policy-making process. This may happen if the trade association is not seen as credible or representative of a broader perspective. Powell (1991: 184) argues that "in institutional environments, organizations compete for social fitness rather than economic efficiency", and trade associations gain social fitness through the demonstration of an adaptation - be it genuine or fictitious - to institutional norms and procedures.

The above-mentioned determinants are not to be considered as an exhaustive list towards understanding how political strategy is formulated within trade associations, but as features that emerged most prominently from the collected data. Nevertheless, this study contributes to work (e.g. Barnett 2013) that has called to undertake a qualitative and in-depth approach to observe and understand the different factors that direct trade association activity.

6.4 The exertion of influence in the political arena

The third research question advanced within this study delves in exploring sectoral trade association political activity (Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016) by revealing the mechanisms underlying the execution of political strategy towards shaping the political environment in which they operate. The findings underlined that trade associations undertake a variety of political activities, and that associations that are not prominently involved in shaping the external environment may nonetheless undertake activities that can fall within the domain of political action. Hence this section addresses the following question:

- **RQ3: How do trade associations exert their influence?**

The objective of this research question was to explore how national and regional trade bodies attempt to interact with political actors and shape the policymaking process. Previous studies in the corporate political activity field (e.g. Barnett 2006a; Hillman and Hitt 1999; Jacomet 2005; Ozer and Lee 2009) have mainly privileged the firm level of analysis and investigated firms undertaking individual and collective activities. In contrast this research positioned the level of analysis specifically on the trade association

as an organisation in its own right (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017). In addition, diverging from studies that have focused on a specific tactic, for example lobbying (Drope and Hansen 2009), this research has explored the broader wealth of activities that trade associations can undertake.

The findings demonstrate that trade associations exert their influence using a variety of different tactics. The main activities included drafting reports and consultations, providing evidence for parliamentary debates, testifying in front of parliamentary committees, developing political ties and engaging with the media and other key stakeholders. As mentioned in the previous section, the strong reliance on political actors to gain institutional legitimacy prevents trade associations to undertake extreme adversarial and confrontational political tactics. In contrast trade bodies rather rely on softer political activities such as seeking to establish relationships with policymakers as well as providing expertise and information to assist the development of public policy. Hence, the activities that emerged as the most widely utilised concern the provision of information and the development of networks and platforms. The first can be aligned to Hillman and Hitt's (1999) information strategy, whereby organisations attempt to influence the political environment by providing specific intelligence. This feature can be explained by the nature of the organisation, as one of its key characteristics is to produce information (Berkowitz and Bor 2016), as well as by the UK's business-government interaction, which similarly to the EU supranational level, is characterised by an "information-based lobbying system" (Barron 2017: 194). The second, namely the development of networks, is intended to foster the connections between the business and political environments. Trade associations are in a position of strength in relation to other intermediaries, given the strong connections and relations with the industrial environment as well as their ability to communicate effectively with all actors operating within the business community. Within previous research, establishing industry connections has been considered in contrasting ways, on one side as an indirect role (Battisti and Perry 2015), on the other side, as a primary role of trade associations (Spillman 2012). The findings of this research empirically extend the latter view as the triangulation of documentary sources, interviews and observations point to substantiate the notion that producing networking opportunities is a central function of all associations operating in the UK aerospace industry.

Previous research argued that trade associations in the UK have been characterised by a largely responsive and reactive approach to government rather than a proactive one (e.g. Grant 1983: 180). Interestingly, the findings of this research contrast or at least are divergent from this perspective, as informants stressed the required complementarity between reactive and proactive political activities. This divergence is possibly explained by the different context in which Grant's research was undertaken, as well as by several informants highlighting that organisations' political activities have evolved and have transformed to include a higher degree of proactivity.

One of the key findings concerning how meta-organisations exert their influence extends Barley's (2010) notion - that firms develop an institutional field to influence government - to trade associations. In line with the author's argument, this research finds that trade associations build on a multitude of actors to convey their interests and attempt to influence the policymaking process. This is mainly done through CEOs or government affairs representatives who interact and relate with associations in the same sector, either horizontally amongst the regional bodies or vertically through the collaboration between the regional and national levels, for example through the Aerospace Federation (as mentioned in Chapter 3). Frequently collaboration is not possible given the unwillingness of other associations to cooperate on specific issues, and trade associations' mangers will attempt to influence their counterparts through their mutual members. Moreover, collaborations will involve associations in other sectors, as well as a broad range of actors including think tanks, charities, learned societies, academia, and political actors. Informants underlined that the latter category play a particularly important role and can be considered as political cheerleaders, which will assist the trade body to convey its message within parliament.

Establishing connections with political actors have been considered as a fundamental constituent of nonmarket strategy (Oliver and Holzinger 2008), and extant work has debated the value and benefits of such linkages to organisations (e.g. Frynas, Mellahi and Pigman 2006; Hillman 2005; Sun, Mellahi, and Thun 2010). Whilst this research does not undertake an extensive analysis of the intensity of political ties developed by the organisations, it does find that trade association managers at both national and regional level focus considerably on developing such connections. The findings evidenced that

national trade associations undertake political activities through a range of different individuals, the president (who is usually a key actor in the aerospace industry), the CEO, as well as policy, public affairs and public relations managers, whereas smaller organisations concentrate political activities on the CEO and possibly another manager who may act as deputy.

Even though the development of political connections presents unquestionable benefits, in some cases they might present negative consequences in the long-term. This is particularly visible and problematic in small trade bodies as the reliance on a single individual to undertake political activities exposes the association to extensive vulnerability and could have negative repercussions on the entire organisation as it would be extremely difficult to maintain or rebuild the ties in the short term if the CEO left the organisation. These results reflect those of Sun, Mellahi, and Wright, who also found that political ties may turn into a liability, as they are "vulnerable to managerial departures because they are largely manager-specific ties made up of closed relationships among interconnected individuals" (2012: 77). Again, these aspects demonstrate the centrality of the CEO as emerged in section 6.3.

This research evidenced considerable differences between the national and regional trade associations, and even though the previous section underlined that any trade association can undertake a political role, the regional bodies present evident limitations in the activities they are able to undertake. Similarly to the firm level of analysis where firm size, given the greater amount of resources enjoyed by large firms, is considered as an indicator towards the development of political activities (e.g. Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004; Schuler and Rehbein 1997), the findings of this study, in line with the resource-based lens, suggest that larger trade associations are more likely to have the necessary organisational, financial resources and political administrative expertise (Dahan 2005b) that will enable them to develop superior political strategies. Moreover, informants suggested that larger trade associations are able to incorporate external resources from member companies in their political tactics more efficiently than smaller organisations.

Another key theme that emerged from the findings concerns the capacity of trade associations to undertake political activities and exert their influence through a broad range of platforms and forums. As evidenced, trade associations interact with, and attempt

to influence political stakeholders in a variety of extremely different settings. These comprise settings such as industry and government roundtables and partnerships (e.g. the AGP or DGP), events in parliament organised in collaboration with parliamentarians, select committee hearings, political party conferences, as well as trade shows and firm site visits. Moreover, it can be put forward that several platforms organised towards assisting firms' economic growth, overlap with activities directed at influencing the political environment. For example, the organisation of trade shows creates networking platforms that enable both the trade association as well as the single companies to interact with public officials, politicians and regulators. These notions can be aligned to Funk and Hirschman's (2017) study that demonstrates how firms' market actions could produce changes in the political and regulatory environments. This does not mean that the development of such forums could directly impact the development of public policy, however these activities should be considered as part of the broader set of political activities that are aimed to gaining policy influence.

6.5 Summary

This chapter, which is structured according to the three research questions, has addressed the gaps in knowledge proposed in Chapter 2, and extended the narrative on the findings, discussing them in relation to extant corporate political activity and nonmarket strategy literature.

The first section presented the determinants that have an impact on trade associations' political role, underlining the key motivations that drive firms to join these voluntary organisations and act collectively. The second section considered how trade associations develop their political strategy. Finally, the third section offered an overview on the different tactics undertaken by trade associations to exert influence on decision and policy-makers. Together, the findings pointed towards a valuable integration between institutional and resource-based perspectives, and hence provided the justification for the adoption of a multi-theoretical framework. Finally, these sections have also offered an outline of how corporate political activity differs between trade associations and corporate members.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The following chapter concludes this thesis by offering the contributions to knowledge and their managerial implications. Section 7.2 indicates how the findings advance nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity literature as well as research on meta-organisations. Section 7.3 provides broader theoretical implications. Section 7.4 articulates the managerial implications for firm and trade association managers. Section 7.5 presents implications for policymakers involved in the interaction with the business environment. Finally, section 7.6 concludes the chapter by discussing the limitations of this study and suggesting several avenues for future research.

7.2 Contributions to nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity literature and to research on trade associations

The essential contribution of this research lies in the in-depth and empirical investigation of trade associations in the UK aerospace industry. Specifically, this thesis explores the factors that determine trade associations' political role and political strategy development, as well as the particular political activities undertaken towards influencing the political and regulatory environment. Chapter 2 underlined that there is a lamentable lack of research that has investigated the specific role and political activity development of trade associations. The contributions of this study aim to provide knowledge that can help to fill this gap and are set in the nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity fields.

The literature review connects two key strands of literature that are strongly interconnected but that have mostly been considered independently from each other. In the nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity field, despite the abundant literature addressing the political activities of business actors attempting to shape the political arena, there is a marked prevalence of studies addressing the firm level of analysis and a dearth of research investigating the formulation of political strategy at trade association level (e.g. Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Barnett 2017: Drope and Hansen 2009). Notwithstanding recent work in the wider nonmarket strategy field, which has mostly focused on the CSR stream of inquiry (e.g. Buchanan and Marques 2017; Marques 2017; Schaefer and Kerrigan 2008), the CPA stream of literature has

predominantly centred its attention on the firm level of analysis whilst investigating collective action (e.g. Barnett 2006a; Jacomet 2005; Ozer and Lee 2009). In sharp contrast this thesis explores trade associations as independent entities and organisations in their own right.

An additional contribution concerns the level of analysis as this study explores trade associations' political role on two different levels: national and regional. Previous research has frequently examined corporate political activity at the national level, and studies using this level of analysis (e.g. Doner and Schneider 2000; Wilts and Meyer 2005) have demonstrated how national trade associations are key actors in the business-government interaction. Nevertheless, Rajwani and Liedong (2015) argue that despite an abundance of studies that focus on the national level, there are other levels where policy is developed. Notwithstanding notable exceptions that have taken into consideration the supranational level (e.g. Beyers 2004; Greenwood 2002) and the local level (e.g. Coleman and Grant 1985; Dixon 2006; Medina 2016), which have nonetheless mostly focused on national and cross-industry associations, the volume of research in this direction is lamentable. In the UK and in other national contexts around the world, there are instances in which policy is devolved to sub-national entities. Business actors are thus required to keep abreast of the function of local political institutions and be able to interact with them. The findings of this research underline that in these circumstances local sectorial trade bodies may become extremely relevant political actors. Moreover, the focus of the research has enabled to emphasise the consideration that local, and generally smaller, trade associations may be considered as proactive political actors that are able to interact with their socio-political environment and attempt to shape it.

Hence, another contribution of this study is to extend research on trade associations' political activity formulation and execution. This in-depth empirical investigation provides insights that enrich the understanding of the dynamics of trade associations' role and political activities (Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011). It is found that trade association categorisations (e.g. Galambos 1988; Rajwani, Lawton, and Philips 2015; Van Waarden 1992) are static and frequently over simplistic representations (Bennett 2000) and trade associations should rather be considered as dynamic organisations in the sense that both large and small organisations may in specific circumstances undertake an effective political role. Previous studies (e.g. Drope and Hansen 2009; Reveley and Ville 2010)

have highlighted that size, concentration, competition and government contracts influence trade associations' political activities, and this study extends this stream of research on trade associations by indicating other factors that enable trade associations' role and functions to change rapidly. These include empirical evidence of the widely recognised belief that the institutional environment and political framework in which organisations are embedded, as well as organisation-specific internal attributes, are crucial determinants of their political role and strategy development (e.g. Bonardi, Holburn, and Vanden Bergh 2006; Dixon 2006; Hillman 2003).

Moreover, this study has provided further evidence on how changes in the political system can influence political activities (Lawton, McGuire, and Rajwani 2013), by underlining that although regionalisation and devolutionary processes did not overturn the predominant role of central government and national trade associations, they have had an impact on the development of regional trade associations as well as on their political activity formulation. It is reasonable to argue that trade associations' role and political functions might have been reinvigorated in specific contexts by the establishment or development of strong regional political institutions, whether in the devolved administrations or across some of the regional contexts in England.

Moreover, this research contributes to recent work (Barnett 2017) that has called for a greater understanding of how political strategy is formulated within trade associations. Specifically, this study contributes to filling this gap by presenting key determinants that have an impact on how these organisations set their agenda. Considering trade associations as a unique form of meta-organisation (Ahrne and Brunsson 2008) has implications on their internal mechanisms that differ consistently from other organisational forms. Notwithstanding the consensus and member-based mechanisms in place within trade associations, previous research (e.g. Barnett 2013; Guèguen 2002) has posited that large firms have a predominant role in the development of trade association activity. Whilst this study empirically validates this notion, it also extends research on meta-organisations by underlining that, albeit its importance, this is just one of the factors determining a trade association's political strategy. The findings provide evidence that at both national and regional level, the role of the manager leading the organisation will have a profound impact on the overall political direction of the organisation as well as on the specific tactics and activities undertaken to operate in the nonmarket environment.

Additionally, this study acknowledges and empirically supports Barley's (2010) argument that firms use several organisations and individuals to build an institutional field in order to influence government. This was a common theme throughout the interviews, and the findings highlight how sectoral trade associations are only one of the intermediaries or entities that operate within the business-government boundary, that are actively or passively used by firms to interact with political stakeholders. The development of the institutional map (Figure 10 above) has been extremely valuable and conducive towards gaining a better understanding of trade associations' environment and institutional field, where they sit in relation to other intermediaries, as well as towards considering their relations with business and political actors. Moreover, this research extends these views to consider that trade associations, as independent organisations, undertake these functions as well. This means that they will build on, collaborate with, and use other organisations and/or political actors to promote their interests. Alongside providing information to policymakers, this was found to be one of the key tactics used, especially by particularly active trade associations to convey their interests and attempt to influence the policy-making process.

Even though the focus and level of analysis of this research is specifically oriented on trade associations as organisations in their own right, there are some minor contributions to the firm level of analysis that should be underlined. This research further extends previous research on CPA and nonmarket strategy by highlighting similarities and differences between trade association and firm political activities. Trade associations undertake a breadth of proactive and reactive political activities that are extremely similar to those employed independently by firms, such as providing information to policymakers and developing relations with political and regulatory actors (e.g. Hillman and Hitt 1999; Sun, Mellahi, and Wright 2012). Conversely, trade associations are not able to interact on in-depth matters and as evidenced rather interact at a broader level (Collins and Roper 2005). Additionally, trade bodies cannot generally rely on confrontational approaches, but have to rather rely on cooperative interactions. Furthermore, the study empirically contributes to the work (e.g. Barnett 2013; Baron 2016) that has sought to understand - or has called for future studies to explore – the reasons that may influence firms' decision to undertake political activities in collaboration with other firms.

In contrast to extant research (e.g. Hillman and Hitt 1999) the findings of the research are in line with the argument that individual and collective political activity should not to be considered as dichotomous, rather they should be viewed as complementary (e.g. Jia 2014; Jia and Mayer 2016; Minto 2016.). Nevertheless, this argument has to be taken with caution as it mostly refers to the larger firms within the industry who are capable of acting independently when required.

Finally, in line with extant work (e.g. Bennett 1997b; Grant 2000) this research contributes to the understanding that trade associations are not to be considered in the sole perspective of business influencing political institutions, but also means through which government can relate with and influence the business environment, for example by using associations as proxies for disseminating information and self-regulatory mechanisms of portions of the economy. Hence, this is another example that demonstrates the bi-directionality of trade associations at the interface of business and government.

7.3 Contributions to theory

In addition to the empirical contributions, this thesis produces important theoretical insights that concern the trade association as a strategic organisation in its own right (Lawton, Rajwani, and Minto 2017). The principal theoretical implication, as evidenced in the visual representation of the findings (Figure 8 above) implies that trade associations' political involvement and political activity development cannot be comprehensively understood with the adoption of a single theoretical perspective. The complexity of these organisations, their organisational configuration and internal mechanisms (which also include the interactions with their membership), as well as the structure and dynamic nature of the environment in which they operate must be taken into consideration. These notions are in line with the view that theoretical rigidity and the adoption of single theoretical lenses is a constrained approach, which has a limited explanatory power of organisations' political action (e.g. Barron 2013; Hadani, Bonardi, and Dahan 2016; Mellahi et al. 2016), and that the incorporation of different lenses may offer a more comprehensive understanding (Lux, Crook, and Woehr 2011).

Work on organisations' involvement in socio-political arenas and on trade associations undertaken within disciplines such as political science (e.g. Beyers 2004; Doner and Schneider 2000; Eising 2007), public affairs (e.g. Barron 2013), sociology (e.g. Spillman

2012) have been more accustomed at integrating diverse theoretical lenses than management studies (e.g. Doh, Lawton, and Rajwani 2012; Hillman 2003; Hillman and Wan 2005; Reveley and Ville 2010). In recent years this has led to numerous calls towards a theoretical integration and the underlining that diverse theoretical perspectives should be taken into consideration (e.g. Frynas, Child, and Tarba 2017; Mellahi et al. 2016). This study's findings and contributions are consistent with these notions in that to fully investigate trade associations and offer a comprehensive illustration of their role and functions it is necessary to consider the environmental conditions as well as internal attributes. This approach is in line with Makadok, Burton, and Barney (forthcoming, 2018: 2) who propose that contributions to theory can occur through the "combination of existing theories". Hence, in this study the joint consideration of multiple lenses has been valuable towards acknowledging how resources, which can be internal and external (i.e. acquired from their members), and the socio-political and regulatory environment in which trade associations are embedded, can influence their role and functions.

On one hand, resource-based views propose that an organisation's resources and capabilities are central aspects towards the ability to develop and undertake political activity and shape the socio-political and regulatory environment (e.g. Dahan 2005a; Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman 2006; Oliver and Holzinger 2008). On the other hand, research, that has focused on institutional theory emphasises that an organisation's participation in the political arena is influenced by the socio-political, regulatory and economic arrangements in which it operates and that in order to gain legitimacy it must conform to institutional expectations (e.g. Feinberg, Hill, and Darendeli 2015; Hillman 2003; Lawton, Rajwani, and McGuire 2013; Oliver 1991).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, institutional theories and particularly the new institutional perspective (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) has been employed to highlight that companies' political actions are influenced by their institutional embeddedness, and to explore how social structures and relationships impact firms' nonmarket strategy (John, Rajwani, and Lawton 2015). This thesis has used these particular perspectives employed in the CPA and NMS literatures and has applied them to a different organisational actor, namely trade associations, hence applying existing theoretical views to a different phenomenon (Makadok, Burton, and Barney forthcoming, 2018). Institutional theories are thus

beneficial towards comprehending environmental conditions discussed within this thesis such as: the UK's pluralist political context; the centralism of policy development and the predominant role of national government; the particular role of political actors (e.g. the connections between MPs and their constituencies); as well as the dynamic nature of the political environment and shifts and transformations of the policy framework, and how these institutional features exert pressure on both national and regional associations' role and on how they design political action.

However, similarly to the firm level of analysis, a limitation and weakness of this perspective is the premise that organisations are considered as passive actors and political activity is merely reactive (John, Lawton, and Rajwani 2015). Nevertheless, the findings have evidenced how trade associations besides monitoring, scanning and responding to institutional pressure, undertake a wide range of activities that entail a clear proactive approach. Hence, having acknowledged the impact stemming from the environment in which business organisations operate, it must be underlined that it is not possible to understand the development of trade associations' political role or explain their political strategies and actions by simply referring to institutional theoretical assumptions (Spillman 2012). Specifically, from the resource-based theoretical perspective, a key contribution lies in the acknowledgement that through the deployment and bundling of internal and external resources, trade associations design influencing strategies that are purposely aimed at anticipating political pressure and shaping their external environment (Lawton, Rajwani, and McGuire 2013). In this respect, a key difference with the firm level of analysis is that firms deploy resources to gain individual benefits such as competitive advantage over their competitors, whereas trade associations deploy them to gain advantages that can benefit their membership and entire industry.

Resources that have emerged include: organisational resources, such as the role of the CEO, in-house public affairs/government relations staff, and the ability to produce information and expertise; relational, such as the ability to develop political ties and foster direct or indirect relationships with key organisations and political stakeholders; and public image and reputational, such as the ability of trade associations to develop a strong reputation over time. One of the key notions that emerged from the findings concerns the CEO's (or manager in charge of the trade association) commitment and orientation to

undertake political activities, as it is fundamental in conferring a trade association its political role. These findings lend support to previous research (e.g. Hadani, Dahan, and Doh 2015; Hart 2010; Griffin and Dunn 2004), which highlights that senior management commitment is key to securing resources that can be implemented to undertake political activity. A key difference between this research and extant work is that previous studies focus their analysis on the firm level whilst the patterns that have emerged from this research explore the trade association level of analysis. This distinction is particularly relevant as there are different dynamics between a firms' senior management ability to manage a company and a trade CEO to manage a trade body. Additionally, this is even more relevant for trade associations if it is considered that in many instances, particularly in smaller trade associations (e.g. the regional bodies included in this study) the CEO is the only individual active in the development and execution of political activity. It could be argued that the same conditions apply to SMEs who do not have an organised government affairs practices, however the key difference is that the prerogative of interest representation organisations should be to interact with the socio, political and economic environment.

Similarly, to the limitations of the institutional perspective, the sole reliance on resource-based views, would have limited the understanding that resource scarce organisations, might in specific conditions play a key political role. Hence, only through the combination of these two theoretical perspectives is it possible to go beyond the limitations of each construct and comprehensively examine trade associations operating on different levels.

Finally, it is encouraging to compare the abovementioned notions with earlier studies on trade associations (e.g. Beyers 2004; Dixon 2006; Valler and Wood 2004), which have claimed that to fully comprehend trade associations and their role it is necessary to take into consideration different perspectives and go beyond strict theoretical frameworks, and rather find a balance between focusing on structure and institutional change, and the role of organisations as agents in modelling their environment.

7.4 Managerial implications

Following the scholarly contributions, this research proposes practical implications for firms and trade associations. First, from the perspective of both firm and trade association managers, this research provides an overview of key political institutions, as well as an array of actors with whom trade associations operating in the UK aerospace context interact. It is essential for business leaders to acknowledge the role of the various actors that have been presented, firstly because these may have a direct impact on the business environment through the elaboration of public policy, laws and regulation. Secondly, because there is a broad range of actors in both the market (e.g. firms) and nonmarket (e.g. other trade associations, politicians, industry experts, journalists, think tanks, academics) that may be extremely important to consider, for example as targets of political activity or in terms of co-operative action.

Second, closely linked to the previous point, and notwithstanding that to many this might sound as an obvious statement, context does matter. This research has clearly evidenced that the environment in which trade associations operate in, has a manifest impact on their role in general, and specifically on their functions as key actors within the complex business-government interface. The specificities of not only the economic, political and regulatory environment, but also of the social, cultural context and historical patterns will have a determining effect on: a) which actors will need to be engaged; and b) how they must or may be engaged with.

Third, from the perspective of trade associations, especially smaller organisations operating at local and regional levels, it is key that managers develop political capital, i.e. strong relationships with a broad range of stakeholders in the social, political and regulatory arenas. This is particularly important for those associations that do not possess a high level of organisational resources (e.g. a dedicated public affairs/government relations team) and thus rely on the CEO/MD to establish connections with key actors. Nevertheless, to avoid becoming vulnerable to managerial departure, these organisations should develop internal mechanisms that formalise and retain these connections once the CEO has left the organisation. Smaller trade associations could coordinate with large members to devise secondment work experiences for firm government relations and public affairs staff to work in local and regional contexts, as happens in the national trade

associations. This could enable smaller trade associations devise more formalised political strategies.

Fourth, acknowledging the differences in the availability of resources, smaller trade associations should learn from the tactics employed by larger organisations on how to deal with changes in the political institutional environment. The findings of this research have highlighted that larger trade associations are able to anticipate, manage, or react (depending on the situation) to institutional change (e.g. changing government, departmental reshuffles, changes in policy) better that smaller associations. It is evident that larger trade associations retain a greater level of resources that enable the organisation to develop more effective political activities, such as for example monitoring and scanning the political environment and engaging with politicians and regulators regularly. However, a greater coordination amongst the smaller organisations and efficient collaborative approaches with national organisations may enable the resource-scarce bodies not to be surprised by sudden or programmed changes in the political environment.

Fifth, from the perspective of firm managers, this study supplements the chorus of research that has stressed how important it is for firms to undertake political activities collectively, in cooperation with other companies, specifically through trade bodies. Even though collective undertakings may be limited by considerations on sharing sensitive information with potential competitors, there are many issues within or across industries that can be tackled more effectively by presenting a unified and collective voice. This is particularly relevant during times of political and economic uncertainty when decision and policy-makers strive to obtain a collective input from the business environment. This is also valid when an industry is tackling a particularly sensitive issue, which firms do not want to engage with directly, as trade associations are generally able to contribute to the political narrative in a more outspoken and blunt approach than individual firms.

7.5 Policy implications

A principal implication of the research is that policy and decision makers should acknowledge trade associations as potentially valuable instruments for fostering economic development strategies. This is in line with Boléat (2017) who in a recent issue of Civil Service World - a specialised magazine for civil servants - stresses that civil

servants and policymakers should not underestimate the value and benefit of collaborating with trade associations. The business leader and former trade body chair argues that the civil service is under pressure in this historical period, mainly due to Brexit and a reduction in economic and human resources. Civil servants should rely on help from those trade associations that are truly representative of their sector and not conveyors of specific interests. This article is revealing in that civil servants and politicians have yet to understand the benefits and value that would ensue following a close collaboration with efficient interest representation organisations.

A second implication concerns the understanding that regional trade associations do not enjoy the same level of resources as larger trade bodies at the national level. This notion is particularly important for local political institutions or entities that are required to design local economic strategies and develop local economic growth. This is particularly relevant given the philosophy outlined in the latest industrial strategy, "the tide has started to turn through City Deals, Growth Deals, Devolution Deals and creating Mayoral Combined Authorities. Power is beginning to shift from Whitehall" (BEIS 2017: 168). Hence, building on the findings outlined in this thesis, decision-makers should attempt not to duplicate local economic and industrial strategy but rather work cooperatively with the objective of developing shared strategies with local economic actors. This notion emerged from those regional trade association managers that expressed their powerlessness to interact effectively with a growing plurality of political or quasi-political entities that developed a breadth of independent and unconnected strategy plans.

7.6 Limitations and avenues for future research

This study addresses research gaps related to trade associations and their political functions in the context of the UK aerospace industry. The in-depth qualitative approach offers an insightful tool to understand the interactions between trade associations and the political actors exploring how these organisations may operate to influence the policy environment. Whilst this research proposes contributions to knowledge and extends the literature on business-government relations, nonmarket strategy and corporate political activity, as well as research on trade associations, there are various limitations that should be highlighted.

Firstly, the main limitation is in line with concerns underlined in previous studies that have sought to analyse organisations' political activities, in that actions in political arenas are frequently sensitive and that "political behaviours are often covert in nature" (Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman 2006: 326). Scholars investigating the other strand of nonmarket strategy, i.e. CSR, can rely on various documentary sources including sustainability reports, whereas organisations do not usually draft CPA reports. Inevitably, these features have consequences on the data collection process, as information is not readily available and easy to collect. Moreover, the context of the research, namely the aerospace industry has an additional burden as most firms deal with sensitive military matters that have made it even more difficult find interviewees and collect documentary data. Consequently, gaining access to potential informants has been extremely challenging.

Strictly related to the previous limitation, the researcher initially sought to include institutional representatives to corroborate the themes emerging from interviews with business representatives. Even though this was partially done with industry experts and through the analysis of government and parliamentary reports, the inclusion of political stakeholders would have surely been beneficial and added value to the research. Future studies could interview politicians and investigate their perceptions on the political role of trade associations.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, another limitation concerning the informants that were interviewed, related to those that did not agree for the interview to be recorded. These entailed only a couple of participants, however the researcher had to take hand-written notes. Notwithstanding the benefits gained in terms of the richness of the data, as informants would have not shared such insights otherwise, it is inevitable that several notions and points might have been missed during the interview.

Moreover, the study explored trade associations' role and activities in a single industry and was limited to one specific national environment. Whilst this allowed an in-depth and rich investigation of this context it presents limitations. As it is fair to state that some of the findings may be applicable to different contexts, it must be put forward that generalizability to other contexts is rather restricted, which is relatively common in qualitative research (Blaikie 2009; Sarantakos 2009). As pointed out in Chapter 2, organisations' political behaviour and activity will differ consistently between industries

(e.g. Frynas, Mellahi, and Pigman 2006), and thus the findings will not be directly transferable to other business sectors across the UK. However, it may be assumed that trade associations that operate in industries that exhibit similar characteristics (e.g. in terms of regulation, government dependence, level of collective activity and the presence of a restricted number of dominant large firms), will possibly demonstrate similar patterns that have been evidenced in this study. After having understood the complexity and specific dynamics of such a unique industry, a future avenue of research could be a comparative study between different industries, similarly to extant work such as Schaefer and Kerrigan's (2008) analysis of CSR activities of associations operating in different industries. The comparative study could also go beyond national borders and entail associations operating in different political environments.

Given that the data collection was undertaken during Brexit, an exceptionally turbulent period, the information gained from the interviews could be influenced by the extreme economic and political uncertainty that befell on the industry. This feature is particularly relevant if the perception on the political role or required political role of trade associations is considered. It could be assumed that in a different period characterised by a higher level of stability the answers concerning the need for trade associations to be politically active might have been different. Nevertheless, this is in line with scholars (e.g. Barnett 2006b) who argue that the prominence of trade associations is higher during unstable times.

Future studies could also delve deeper in the analysis of the individuals managing the meta-organisations. Scholars could investigate if trade association managers engage in political activities, for example by developing political ties, in order to gain private benefits.

Moreover, the findings strongly suggest that trade associations' political strategy is influenced by competing pressures. Consistent with previous studies which have underlined that internal and external pressures influence organisations' strategy (e.g. Hillman and Wan 2005), and studies that have examined competing institutional incentives (e.g. Barron and Trouille 2016), this study's findings point towards the notion that trade associations face competing pressures. On one side, they face an internal pressure stemming from member firms that solicit the organisation to influence and shape

the environment on their behalf. On the other side they face an external pressure stemming from the political environment as they have to conform to broad institutional pressure and to specific requests from political actors, which will enable them to maintain relationships and be involved in the decision-making process. These conflicting pressures cannot be ignored because of the need to gain legitimacy from both business and political actors. Future research could explore these institutional logics in more detail to understand how trade associations are able to manage these competing pressures, and if there are specific instances in which one of them prevails over the other. Hence, whilst keeping in consideration the various contributions that this investigation has provided, this study suggests that more in-depth research is needed towards shedding light on such a crucial actor operating at the interface of business-government relations.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

THEMES	QUESTIONS	PROMTS
General	1. In your opinion, why do firms act individually or collectively in terms of government relations?	– What are the main motivational factors for the association to engage with decision/policy makers? – Is it mainly a political role or a business-oriented role? Do you think this has changed over time?
Intermediaries	2. Who are the key intermediaries in the business-government relationship? What is their role? How and why do you relate with them? 3. How would you describe the role and functions of the various associations (national and regional) in the UK aerospace industry? 4. What are the main differences between sectorial associations' approaches to relating with institutions compared to other intermediaries' approaches?	– E.g. Think tanks, academia, learned societies, other associations – National vs. regional associations vs. associations operating in devolved admins.
Institutions	5. Who are the key institutional stakeholders? Why do firms and associations relate with them? 6. How do you think institutional change impacts the development of associations' political strategy? Does it have a different impact on firms? 7. How are associations (national and regional) able to anticipate/adapt/react to institutional change?	– E.g. Brexit, RDA regional level, Budget, change in government. – Ask about institutional gaps – RDAs >LEPs – Role of MPs
Political Strategy and activities	8. How do trade associations exert their influence? 9. How do firms' interactions with decision-makers differ from associations'?	– Compliance, matching agenda, leverage – Role of primes, role of CEO – E.g. Internal and external

	10. Do you think that associations have to align their strategies to government's agenda more than firms do? 11. In your opinion what are the key factors that determine an association's political strategy? 12. Have associations increased their political activities in relation to the activities undertaken by firms? 13. In your opinion, how do associations facilitate the business-government interaction?
Evaluation of role and impact	14. Finally, how would you describe the impact that associations have on shaping their external environment?

Source: Elaborated by author

Appendix 2: Selected interview excerpts

Embeddedness in the institutional environment		
Second Order Themes	**First Order Categories**	**Representative Data/ Selected evidence**
Firm engagement	Lack of resources	For the smaller companies, you don't have the resources, so it is actually very useful to have the trade association push them, to represent the SMEs because without them you don't have the resources to affect government policy, and potentially it will be tilted towards the bigger companies who do have the resources and the louder voice (Interview 19, trade association). The smaller companies do not have resources, time or people and most of the times it is up to the CEO or top managers to undertake political activities (Interview 12, trade association).
	Economic self-interest	That is why people pay their subscriptions to […] it's because they think there will be some commercial benefit from being a member (Interview 19, trade association). They are for me sort of a marketing vehicle and a resource of information (Interview 14, industry expert).
	Intelligence gathering and information sharing	So sometimes the trade bodies makes us aware of issues that we are concerned about. So for example at the moment, [trade association] is having regular meetings with the secretary of state on Brexit, and the secretary of state says I want to meet the sector. I don't just want to meet [company]. So they are there, acting as a bridge, fulfilling their important role, where they are informing us about what the issues are and we are using them as a channel to use our issues (Interview 23, firm). The [trade association] is vital towards information and intelligence sharing…obviously very helpful when they have their conferences (Interview 7, firm).
	Being part of a club	I think it is about being member of a club […] it is being part of something bigger than just running your own business (Interview 15, trade association).

		For some companies it's better to be part of the community, and to be seen to be part of the community (Interview 16, industry expert).
	Supply chain management	Trade associations are fundamental in this respect, namely the development of the supply chain (Interview 8, firm). [The association] is very strong, encouraged in part from (company name) for obvious reasons, they saw it as a useful tool to manage their supply chain. (Interview 20, trade association)
	Sector specific issues and collective voice	Sometimes there are messages that you want to get across to government that you do not want your company's name associated with, and its easier to have someone else deliver that message (Interview 19, trade association). There are a lot of issues, which sit across the industry as a whole and often it is better to collaborate with your competitors and your partners than it is to compete around those issue (Interview 14, industry expert).
Contextual conditions	Organisational stakeholders	[The charity is] an independent organisation, non-commercial, not for profit and […] has to report to the charity commission. [The charity] can't lobby but can be influential and can bring people together, sometimes with politicians and civil servants, but it will also bring those individuals who work for companies and facilitate their interaction with civil servants (Interview 16, industry expert). […] so companies that are active in aerospace but not necessarily totally wedded to aerospace's business their sole source of income…it is important for those companies to have different sets of voices, not just trade associations but alongside those trade associations there are the professional associations and there are the organisations that are established to help the development of future products and systems (Interview 14, industry expert)
	Institutional stakeholders	We don't have a single entity, that is not the way government policy is formed, it is not the way it works. Many people have a voice, […] the treasury has a voice, the defence has a voice and the rest of the political machine has a voice (Interview 14, industry expert).
	Government impact on the industry	The government creates the environment for the industry, whether you are a company or a person, you have to respond to your environment (Interview 14, industry expert). Pretty much wherever you go in the world and see an aerospace industry, that is actually because government and industry are working together. It doesn't tend to work if government isn't supporting it, because it is very

		long timescales, very high risk, very high technology and the barriers to entry are huge. (Interview 15, trade association).
	Role of MPs	In the UK the way politics works is that there is of course a government with ministers who make the national decisions, but they are essentially influenced by members of parliament who may be in the government, but may not be (Interview 20, trade association). MPs that represent constituencies with a high number of aerospace companies play a great role. As SMEs are scattered across the country, firms and associations can use these features as resources to lobby MPs (Interview 13, firm).
	Perception of institutional change and institutional gaps	An organisation like mine, which is only a small trade association, does not have the capacity now to go and do what it used to do with a Regional Development Agency with five different Local Enterprise Partnerships, we can't go and have the same conversation five times, we can't go and influence the same initiative five times (Interview 15, trade association). The size of the public sector has shrunk, years ago you used to have easy access to civil servants, they would be glad to take a meeting from you. [Now] it's much more difficult, it is becoming such a crowded environment as well, you have got the establishment by the groups […] it is much more difficult to get heard (Interview 16, industry expert).
Strategy formulation	External drivers	Political and fiscal events drive [the association's] policy strategy (Interview 5, trade association). The development of political activities is definitely influenced by institutional pressure (Interview 25, industry expert).
	Matching the policymaker's agenda	[The association] will tap in government priorities and agenda and try to align its strategies and aims to that (Interview 12, trade association). We would look very carefully at what their political, overall strategy was to see how we could take what we wanted and say this fits, because it is much harder, almost impossible to persuade government to do something which isn't in its strategy at all (Interview 19, trade association).
	Internal drivers	The political strategies are defined by the main contractors, which have the biggest political weight (Interview 13, firm).

		It's generally the prevailing interest of the prime that goes through, we don't try to align…we try to find overlapping interests, which tend to be from the primes' perspectives (Interview 18, trade association).
	Role of CEO	I think our CEO does an inordinate amount of working in…he is very passionate about SME representation, he does a lot of approaching MPs, he does a lot of approaching people that he thinks have some influence, and he is very, very active. Now […] can afford to be very active because he is kind of self-financing (Interview 18, trade association). I would say that the political impact was minimal, it was really down to the companies to look after themselves, and of course that reflected the characters that run it, they tended to be ex RAF (Interview 20, trade association).
	Political resources	Because our offices are close to parliament, not far from Westminster, they were prepared to come up over lunch, have a sandwich and we will talk to you about this and that and we would gather a half a dozen of MPs on a particular issue they were interested in and we wanted to tell them our view on it (Interview 20, trade association). I employed people that were ex civil servants to come and work, because they would use the language and the format that would work inside the department, not the same I might have used in industry for example (Interview 21, trade association).
Shaping the institutional environment		
Second Order Themes	**First Order Categories**	**Representative Data/ Selected evidence**
Strategy execution	Market activities	Over ten years we have done over £20m worth of supplier development programs, so whether that is skills, innovation or supply chain improvement, we've done all of those types of activities to help our members' businesses (Interview 15, trade association). The supply chain improvement programs, SC21, that is where we are trying to improve productivity make the UK more competitive, the trade body ADS has been instrumental in making that happen, and having those sort of standards (Interview 23, firm).

	Nonmarket activities	Go to the party conference, hold a breakfast, parliamentary teas, that was another good one as you get a MP sponsor and you go there and have a tea party in the house, if you were lucky you would get a dozen MPs sign up and it was always a hit and miss (Interview 21, trade association). You are going to get some that are better than others, and they are going to have some strengths depending on what their strategy is. Some may not be ultra public, and not be in the press a lot but they may have very good civil service contacts, that means they can get stuff done quite easily (Interview 13, firm).
Platforms and forums for engagement	Reactive and proactive engagement	We needed to be a bit more systematic and continuous, you couldn't simply be reactive, 'oh there is a crisis, project cancelled, what do we do, write a paper?' No that was not good, you had to forge relationships (Interview 20, trade association). It was really my job in part to anticipate what we might need to do, you don't just wait for the question to come from government 'so what do you want to do about this or whatever?' You say 'I think we are going to be asked this and we would have to be good enough to know what was going to be expected from us. So that we could have a position and I could know what to say on behalf of the industry (Interview 21, trade association).
	Cheerleaders and activists	Instead of going direct, I tried direct but it did not work. I got to their board, I knew members of their board and got their board to support us. I got my members, who are members of [trade association] to lobby the regional directors and the regional directors went in to the chief executive of [trade association] saying the same thing as the board was saying (Interview 19, trade association) The sponsoring department for the industry was then DTI now BEIS, we went to them and said look this is important, we need your help inside Whitehall. We had occasionally some help from the individual members of parliament who were ministers or particularly interested in the industry. We got across the message. (Interview 21, trade association).
	Personal networks and political capital	We have personal networks, […] who is our CEO, he has a very, very extensive network, so he knows a lot of people in BIS and a lot of people in the primes, and he'll engage with them […], they create various working groups and networking type of opportunities where if he is going for dinner somewhere in London the chap from BIS will be there, and somebody from the Welsh devolved administration will be there and he'll have a chat, and he'll do it in a very kind of soft way of…"oh you might want to think about this, or nobody is helping anybody do this" (Interview 18, trade association).

		It was nice to have two guys that I knew well from a different context in government. So we would go and talk to them about general stuff. It was very useful (Interview 20, trade association).
	Structured engagement	One thing we try to do and it does exist, is to create regular forum through which industry and government can meet, discuss and engage on issues, and that is across all levels of companies and across all the sectors (Interview 19, trade association). We are probably one of the most organised business sectors in the UK, So we have had the AGP since 2010, so our industry has met to discuss the key issues that it faces every month since 2010 (Interview 15, trade association).
	Informal engagement	We would use that as our annual opportunity to "I call it unprotected lobbying" because that is where ministers wouldn't have civil servants, they would be there as party officials, parties, so they wouldn't be surrounded by armies of civil servants, they might have their special advisors who we got to know (Interview 20, trade association).

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Project title:

"Aerospace is Politics with Wings on it". Exploring the Role and Political Function of Trade Associations in the UK Aerospace Industry.

Name of researcher:

Alessandro Stuart Di Bona

	Please tick
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the research process.	☐
3. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence	☐
5. I agree to be recorded as part of the research project (if requested)	☐
6. I agree to take part in the research project	☐

Name of participant:

Date: Signature:

Alessandro Stuart Di Bona (researcher)

Date: Signature:

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Study title: "Aerospace is Politics with Wings on it". Exploring the Role and Political Function of Trade Associations in the UK Aerospace Industry.

Information about the project/Purpose of the project

This interview is part of a study investigating the complex and dynamic field of business-government relations in the aerospace industry. The purpose of the study is to explore the role of trade associations in the context of business-government relations in the UK aerospace industry. Furthermore, an important aspect is to consider associations' embeddedness within the UK's institutional framework.

I am interested in gaining a deeper understanding about these organisations by having discussions and undertaking interviews with senior firm, association and political representatives.

This interview will be conducted to gain insights in the interaction between firms, business associations and political, legislative and regulatory institutions by understanding participants' perceptions and experiences.

Why have I been chosen?

For the purposes of this study I intend to interview senior representatives of companies, associations who work in public affairs, government affairs, public relations and related areas, as well as political actors and industry experts who have extensive experience in the aerospace industry.

Do I have to take part?

No. The participation is voluntary and it is your individual decision to take part in the interview. No disadvantages will arise for you in case you do not take part. If you decide to withdraw, you can contact me using the contact details below. After withdrawal from the study, your data will be destroyed and not used in the study.

What is the duration of the interview?

This interview lasts approximately one hour.

What do I have to do if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview at the company's premises. The interview will take place between September 2016 and March 2018. You will be asked about the interactions between firms and trade associations with local/national political institutions and your perceptions on how relations are developed. With your permission, the interview will be recorded using audio

recording equipment. You will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand the purpose of the research and agree to participate in this study.

What are the risks associated with this project?

The interview does not include intimate or other questions of private nature. The questions refer only to the activities that firms and associations undertake to relate with public institutions such as governmental departments or other associations. Any personal or controversial information shared by you will remain confidential at all times. This research is undertaken following Coventry University ethics standards. I can assure that this research will not cause any harm or discomfort to you.

What are the benefits of taking part?

There will be benefits of taking part in this research for participants of political institutions as well as for representatives of associations and companies, as the research aims at developing a better understanding of the interactions that characterise the complex arena of business-government relations, and how to deal with political and regulatory uncertainty. The notions that will be developed during this study will be highly significant towards the formulation of efficient and effective industrial policies as well as towards the development of the competitive dynamics of the aerospace industry. It is intended that the findings from this research may be able to feed into policy learning about the future engagement of government with the aerospace sector, as well as provide managers (both at firm and association level) with an overview of political strategies developed within the industry.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Participants will remain under anonymity in all stages of this investigation. Information received from every participant will be stored securely in password protected electronic files. All references to individuals will be removed or given pseudonyms if data is to be included within the submitted study, unless express permission has been given. Various data collected will be demolished on submission and completion of the research project.

What if something goes wrong?

If you do not wish to be involved in the interview process anymore, you may withdraw at any time. If things go wrong, or you wish to complain, you can contact the project supervisor or myself. Contact details are given below.

What will happen with the results of the study?

The results of the study will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis. At a later point, parts of the thesis may be published in peer reviewed academic journals. The results of the study may also be presented at academic conferences.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by Alessandro Stuart Di Bona, a PhD student at the Centre for Business in Society (Faculty of Business and Law) at Coventry University. The Centre for Business in Society is funding the research.

Who has reviewed this study?

The project supervisor and a Faculty Research Ethics Leader, as part of the University Applied Research Committee (UARC).

Thank you very much for your participation!

Contact for Further Information

Researcher Contact Details:

Alessandro Stuart DI Bona

Centre for Business in Society

Faculty of Business and Law

Coventry University

Director of Studies Contact Details:

Dr. Jason Begley

Research Fellow & PGR Director

Centre for Business in Society | Coventry University

(Researcher keeps this section)

I agree to take part in this interview under the conditions explained to me above:

Participant Signature..... Date.....

Researcher Signature Date

Are you interested in receiving a report based on this research when the study is complete?

YES.....

NO.....

Contact details:

Phone number..... Email.....

Appendix 5: Document of Ethical Approval

Coventry University ETHICS

Medium to High Risk Research Ethics Approval

Project Title

"Aerospace is Politics with Wings on it". Exploring the Role and Political Function of Trade Associations in the UK Aerospace Industry

Record of Approval

Principal Investigator

I **request an ethics peer review** and confirm that I have answered all relevant questions in this checklist honestly.	X
I confirm that I will carry out the project in the ways described in this checklist. I will immediately suspend research and request new ethical approval if the project subsequently changes the information I have given in this checklist.	X
I confirm that I, and all members of my research team (if any), have read and agreed to abide by the Code of Research Ethics issued by the relevant national learned society.	X
I confirm that I, and all members of my research team (if any), have read and agreed to abide by the University's Research Ethics, Governance and Integrity Framework.	X

Name: Alessandro Di Bona.....

Date: 09/11/2015 .....

Student's Supervisor (if applicable)

I have read this checklist and confirm that it covers all the ethical issues raised by this project fully and frankly. I also confirm that these issues have been discussed with the student and will continue to be reviewed in the course of supervision.

Name: Jason Begley .....

Date: 20/04/2018 .....

Reviewer (if applicable)

Date of approval by anonymous reviewer: 20/04/2018

Medium to High Risk Research Ethics Approval Checklist

Project Information

Project Ref	P38572
Full name	Alessandro Di Bona
Faculty	Faculty of Business and Law
Department	Centre for Business in Society
Supervisor	Jason Begley
Module Code	FBL-PHD
EFAAF Number	
Project title	"Aerospace is Politics with Wings on it". Exploring the Role and Political Function of Trade Associations in the UK Aerospace Industry
Date(s)	27/04/2015 - 27/04/2018
Created	09/11/2015 18:36

Project Summary

This research investigates the dynamic relationships between businesses and political institutions in the aerospace industry, whilst considering the role of intermediaries such as trade associations. Specifically, it explores the role of a specific form of meta-organisation (i.e. trade associations) in a highly politicised context such as the UK aerospace industry. The research focuses on developing knowledge of how national and regional sectoral trade associations develop political activities and attempt to influence and shape their political environment. Primary data has been collected through interviews with representatives of firms and trade associations operating in the aerospace industry. The face-to-face interviews with senior representatives of UK trade associations and firms have been conducted to acquire information on their relationships and interactions with political institutions as well as the development of their political strategies. The interviews have been complemented with the analysis of a broad range of secondary and archival documents.

Names of Co-Investigators and their organisational affiliation (place of study/employer)	
Is the project self-funded?	YES
Who is funding the project?	Centre for Business in Society
Has the funding been confirmed?	YES
Are you required to use a Professional Code of Ethical Practice appropriate to your discipline?	NO
Have you read the Code?	YES

Project Details

What is the purpose of the project?	The purpose of the study is to explore the role and functions of trade associations, acknowledging that these organisations are intrinsically embedded in the social and political environment. In order to achieve this wide-ranging aim several specific research questions and objectives were developed. Research questions • What are the determinants of trade associations' political role? • How is political strategy defined and exercised within trade associations? • How do trade associations exert their influence? Objectives - To explore internal features within trade associations which affect the development of political strategies - To explore external environmental features which affect the development of political strategies - To explore the political activities that associations undertake to interact and attempt to influence policy-makers
What are the planned or desired outcomes?	A key outcome of this research will be to explore the relationships between the private and public environments as well as explore the extent to which associations should be considered as profoundly embedded within the institutional environment (Holburn & Van den Bergh, 2008). This notion is highly significant towards the formulation of efficient and effective industrial policies as well as towards the development of the competitive dynamics of the aerospace industry. It is intended that the findings from this research may be able to feed into policy learning about the future engagement of government with the aerospace sector, as well as provide managers (both at firm and association level) with an overview of political

	strategies developed within the industry.
Explain your research design	The research problem, the development of research questions and objectives inspired a qualitative approach. Thus, an abductive case study research design has been developed, entailing qualitative methods. Given the lack of information and the exploratory nature, the qualitative approach is considered to be the most appropriate. This approach has allowed a deep understanding of the interactions between firms, trade associations and institutional bodies, as well an appreciation of how political strategies are developed. The qualitative approach has allowed the researcher to comprehend the complex processes and diverse perspectives within the field of business-government relations. Furthermore, the case study strategy, specifically a cross-sectional multi-case design has allowed the adoption of a variety of data sources. The research design is consistent with the adopted strategy and with the research questions. The data has been collected through primary and secondary sources. The adoption of multiple methods and sources within the case studies, has allowed triangulation to check and corroborate findings in the analysis as well as ensure validity and reliability.
Outline the principal methods you will use	Primary data has been collected through semi-structured interviews. Pre-formulated questions have guided the discussion while leaving room for adjustment and following up on the interviewee's answers. The key informants have been: company's public affairs managers, government affairs managers, trade association's managers and political analysts. Industry experts have also been interviewed to guarantee validity and an independent source of information. The informants are identified through personal contacts, snowball sampling and by sending formal emails to companies, associations and institutional departments. The multiple sources of secondary data are institutional documents such as: House of Commons and House of Lords papers, reports and publications, White papers, Minutes of meetings, EU publications such as the Official Journal of the European Union, European Parliament law and reports,

	European Commission papers and reports, and EU press releases. These have been accessed through respective online databases and the authentic electronic Official Journal of the EU. Furthermore, company press releases, annual reports and business reports have also been retrieved.	
Are you proposing to use an external research instrument, validated scale or follow a published research method?		NO
If yes, please give details of what you are using		
Will your research involve consulting individuals who support, or literature, websites or similar material which advocates, any of the following: terrorism, armed struggles, or political, religious or other forms of activism considered illegal under UK law?		NO
Are you dealing with Secondary Data? (e.g. sourcing info from websites, historical documents)		YES
Are you dealing with Primary Data involving people? (e.g. interviews, questionnaires, observations)		YES
Are you dealing with personal or sensitive data?		NO
Will the Personal or Sensitive data be shared with a third party?		
Will the Personal or Sensitive data be shared outside of the European Economic Area ("EEA")?		
Is the project solely desk based? (e.g. involving no laboratory, workshop or off-campus work or other activities which pose significant risks to researchers or participants)		NO
Are there any other ethical issues or risks of harm raised by the study that have not been covered by previous questions?		NO
If yes, please give further details		

DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) formerly CRB (Criminal Records Bureau)

Question			Yes	No
1	Does the study require DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks?			X
	If YES, please give details of the serial number, date obtained and expiry date			
2	If NO, does the study involve direct contact by any member of the research team:			
	a) with children or young people under 18 years of age?			X
	b) with adults who have learning difficulties, brain injury, dementia, degenerative neurological disorders?			X
	c) with adults who are frail or physically disabled?			X
	d) with adults who are living in residential care, social care, nursing homes, re-ablement centres, hospitals or hospices?			X
	e) with adults who are in prison, remanded on bail or in custody?			X
	If you have answered YES to any of the questions above please explain the nature of that contact and what you will be doing			

External Ethical Review

Question		Yes	No
1	Will this study be submitted for ethical review to an external organisation? (e.g. Another University, Social Care, National Health Service, Ministry of Defence, Police Service and Probation Office)		X
	If YES, name of external organisation		
2	Will this study be reviewed using the IRAS system?		X
3	Has this study previously been reviewed by an external organisation?		X

Confidentiality, security and retention of research data

Question			Yes	No
1	Are there any reasons why you cannot guarantee the full security and confidentiality of any personal or confidential data collected for the study?			X
	If YES, please give an explanation			
2	Is there a significant possibility that any of your participants, and associated persons, could be directly or indirectly identified in the outputs or findings from this study?			X
	If YES, please explain further why this is the case			
3	Is there a significant possibility that a specific organisation or agency or participants could have confidential information identified, as a result of the way you write up the results of the study?			X
	If YES, please explain further why this is the case			
4	Will any members of the research team retain any personal of confidential data at the end of the project, other than in fully anonymised form?			X
	If YES, please explain further why this is the case			
5	Will you or any member of the team intend to make use of any confidential information, knowledge, trade secrets obtained for any other purpose than the research project?			X
	If YES, please explain further why this is the case			
6	Will you be responsible for destroying the data after study completion?		X	
	If NO, please explain how data will be destroyed, when it will be destroyed and by whom			

Participant Information and Informed Consent

Question			Yes	No
1	Will all the participants be fully informed BEFORE the project begins why the study is being conducted and what their participation will involve?		X	
	If NO, please explain why			
2	Will every participant be asked to give written consent to participating in the study, before it begins?		X	
	If NO, please explain how you will get consent from your participants. If not written consent, explain how you will record consent			
3	Will all participants be fully informed about what data will be collected, and what will be done with this data during and after the study?		X	
	If NO, please specify			
4	Will there be audio, video or photographic recording of participants?		X	
	Will explicit consent be sought for recording of participants?		X	
	If NO to explicit consent, please explain how you will gain consent for recording participants			
5	Will every participant understand that they have the right not to take part at any time, and/or withdraw themselves and their data from the study if they wish?		X	
	If NO, please explain why			
6	Will every participant understand that there will be no reasons required or repercussions if they withdraw or remove their data from the study?		X	
	If NO, please explain why			
7	Does the study involve deceiving, or covert observation of, participants?			X
	Will you debrief them at the earliest possible opportunity?			
	If NO to debrief them, please explain why this is necessary			

Risk of harm, potential harm and disclosure of harm

Question			Yes	No
1	Is there any significant risk that the study may lead to physical harm to participants or researchers?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will take steps to reduce or address those risks			
2	Is there any significant risk that the study may lead to psychological or emotional distress to participants?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will take steps to reduce or address those risks			
3	Is there any risk that the study may lead to psychological or emotional distress to researchers?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will take steps to reduce or address those risks			
4	Is there any risk that your study may lead or result in harm to the reputation of participants, researchers, or their employees, or any associated persons or organisations?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will take steps to reduce or address those risks			
5	Is there a risk that the study will lead to participants to disclose evidence of previous criminal offences, or their intention to commit criminal offences?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will take steps to reduce or address those risks			
6	Is there a risk that the study will lead participants to disclose evidence that children or vulnerable adults are being harmed, or at risk or harm?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will take steps to reduce or address those risks			
7	Is there a risk that the study will lead participants to disclose evidence of serious risk of other types of harm?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will take steps to reduce or address those risks			
8	Are you aware of the CU Disclosure protocol?		X	

Payments to participants

Question			Yes	No
1	Do you intend to offer participants cash payments or any kind of inducements, or reward for taking part in your study?			X
	If YES, please explain what kind of payment you will be offering (e.g. prize draw or store vouchers)			
2	Is there any possibility that such payments or inducements will cause participants to consent to risks that they might not otherwise find acceptable?			
3	Is there any possibility that the prospect of payment or inducements will influence the data provided by participants in any way?			
4	Will you inform participants that accepting payments or inducements does not affect their right to withdraw from the study at any time?			

Capacity to give valid consent

Question			Yes	No
1	Do you propose to recruit any participants who are:			
	a)	children or young people under 18 years of age?		X
	b)	adults who have learning difficulties, mental health condition, brain injury, advanced dementia, degenerative neurological disorders?		X
	c)	adults who are physically disabled?		X
	d)	adults who are living in residential care, social care, nursing homes, re-ablement centres, hospitals or hospices?		X
	e)	adults who are in prison, remanded on bail or in custody?		X
	If you answer YES to any of the questions please explain how you will overcome any challenges to gaining valid consent			
2	Do you propose to recruit any participants with possible communication difficulties, including difficulties arising from limited use of knowledge of the English language?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will overcome any challenges to gaining valid consent			
3	Do you propose to recruit any participants who may not be able to understand fully the nature of the study, research and the implications for them of participating in it or cannot provide consent themselves?			X
	If YES, please explain how you will overcome any challenges to gaining valid consent			

Recruiting Participants

Question			Yes	No
1	Do you propose to recruit any participants who are:			
	a)	students or employees of Coventry University or partnering organisation(s)?		X
		If YES, please explain if there is any conflict of interest and how this will be addressed		
	b)	employees/staff recruited through other businesses, voluntary or public sector organisations?		X
		If YES, please explain how permission will be gained		
	c)	pupils or students recruited through educational institutions (e.g. primary schools, secondary schools, colleges)?		X
		If YES, please explain how permission will be gained		
	d)	clients/volunteers/service users recruited through voluntary public services?		X
		If YES, please explain how permission will be gained		
	e)	participants living in residential care, social care, nursing homes, re-ablement centres hospitals or hospices?		X
		If YES, please explain how permission will be gained		
	f)	recruited by virtue of their employment in the police or armed forces?		X
		If YES, please explain how permission will be gained		
	g)	adults who are in prison, remanded on bail or in custody?		X
		If YES, please explain how permission will be gained		
	h)	who may not be able to refuse to participate in the research?		X
		If YES, please explain how permission will be gained		

Online and Internet Research

Question				Yes	No
1	Will any part of your study involve collecting data by means of electronic media (e.g. the Internet, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, online forums, etc)?			X	
	If YES, please explain how you will obtain permission to collect data by this means		I will collect publicly available information.		
2	Is there a possibility that the study will encourage children under 18 to access inappropriate websites, or correspond with people who pose risk of harm?				X
	If YES, please explain further				
3	Will the study incur any other risks that arise specifically from the use of electronic media?				X
	If YES, please explain further				
4	Will you be using survey collection software (e.g. BoS, Filemaker)?				X
	If YES, please explain which software				
5	Have you taken necessary precautions for secure data management, in accordance with data protection and CU Policy?			X	
	If NO	please explain why not			
	If YES	Specify location where data will be stored	Information received from every participant will be stored securely and appropriate access control mechanisms such as password protection and restricted access will be applied when the data is held on university computers. The personal data held in manual files will be handled in a way that prevents accidental or deliberate access by third parties eg by keeping data in locked filing cabinets or secure rooms.Various data collected will be demolished on submission and completion of the research project.		
		Planned disposal date	30/04/2018		
		If the research is funded by an external organisation, are there any requirements for storage and disposal?			X
		If YES, please specify details			

Languages

Question			Yes	No
1	Are all or some of the consent forms, information leaflets and research instruments associated with this project likely to be used in languages other than English?			X
	If YES, please specify the language[s] to be used			
2	Have some or all of the translations been undertaken by you or a member of the research team?			
	Are these translations in lay language and likely to be clearly understood by the research participants?			
	Please describe the procedures used when undertaking research instrument translation (e.g. forward and back translation), clarifying strategies for ensuring the validity and reliability or trustworthiness of the translation			
3	Have some or all of the translations been undertaken by a third party?			
	If YES, please specify the name[s] of the persons or agencies performing the translations			
	Please describe the procedures used when undertaking research instrument translation (e.g. forward and back translation), clarifying strategies for ensuring the validity and reliability of the translation			

Laboratory/Workshops

Question			Yes	No
1	Does any part of the project involve work in a laboratory or workshop which could pose risks to you, researchers or others?			X
	If YES: If you have risk assessments for laboratory or workshop activities you can refer to them here & upload them at the end, or explain in the text box how you will manage those risks			

Research with non-human vertebrates

Question			Yes	No
1	Will any part of the project involve animal habitats or tissues or non-human vertebrates?			X
	If YES, please give details			
2	Does the project involve any procedure to the protected animal whilst it is still alive?			
3	Will any part of your project involve the study of animals in their natural habitat?			
	If YES, please give details			
4	Will the project involve the recording of behaviour of animals in a non-natural setting that is outside the control of the researcher?			
	If YES, please give details			
5	Will your field work involve any direct intervention other than recording the behaviour of the animals available for observation?			
	If YES, please give details			
6	Is the species you plan to research endangered, locally rare or part of a sensitive ecosystem protected by legislation?			
	If YES, please give details			
7	Is there any significant possibility that the welfare of the target species of those sharing the local environment/habitat will be detrimentally affected?			
	If YES, please give details			
8	Is there any significant possibility that the habitat of the animals will be damaged by the project, such that their health and survival will be endangered?			
	If YES, please give details			
9	Will project work involve intervention work in a non-natural setting in relation to invertebrate species other than Octopus vulgaris?			
	If YES, please give details			

Blood Sampling / Human Tissue Analysis

Question			Yes	No
1	Does your study involve collecting or use of human tissues or fluids? (e.g. collecting urine, saliva, blood or use of cell lines, 'dead' blood)			X
	If YES, please give details			
2	If your study involves blood samples or body fluids (e.g. urine, saliva) have you clearly stated in your application that appropriate guidelines are to be followed (e.g. The British Association of Sport and Exercise Science Physiological Testing Guidelines (2007) or equivalent) and that they are in line with the level of risk?			
	If NO, please explain why not			
3	If your study involves human tissue other than blood and saliva, have you clearly stated in your application that appropriate guidelines are to be followed (e.g. The Human Tissues Act, or equivalent) and that they are in line with level of risk?			
	If NO, please explain why not			

Travel

	Question		Yes	No
1	Does any part of the project require data collection off campus? (e.g. work in the field or community)		X	
	If YES: You must consider the potential hazards from off campus activities (e.g. working alone, time of data collection, unfamiliar or hazardous locations, using equipment, the terrain, violence or aggression from others). Outline the precautions that will be taken to manage these risks, AS A MINIMUM this must detail how researchers would summon assistance in an emergency when working off campus. For complex or high risk projects you may wish to complete and upload a separate risk assessment	The research will be conducted in a business environment during business hours in central London. A risk assessment form is enclosed to this project.		
2	Does any part of the project involve the researcher travelling outside the UK (or to very remote UK locations)?			X
	If YES: Please give details of where, when and how you will be travelling. For travel to high risk places you may wish to complete and upload a separate risk assessment			
3	Are all travellers aware of contact numbers for emergency assitance when away (e.g. local emergency assistance, ambulance/local hospital/police, insurance helpline [+44 (0) 2071 737797] and CU's 24/7 emergency line [+44 (0) 2476 888555])?			
4	Are there any travel warnings in place advising against all, or essential only travel to the destination? NOTE: Before travel to countries with 'against all travel', or 'essential only' travel warnings, staff must check with Finance to ensure insurance coverage is not affected. Undergraduate projects in high risk destinations will not be approved			
5	Are there increased risks to health and safety related to the destination? e.g. cultural differences, civil unrest, climate, crime, health outbreaks/concerns, and travel arrangements?			
	If YES, please specify			
6	Do all travelling members of the research team have adequate travel insurance?			
7	Please confirm all travelling researchers have been advised to seek medical advice regarding vaccinations, medical conditions etc, from their GP			